Affect and the Anthropocene: The Art Artefact and Ecological Grief

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Abstract

Here we stand, each one of us one primate among billions in a species that has overrun and ruined its habitat, heading for a population correction the likes of which the human world has never seen, on a wobbly spinning rock with a rapidly warming atmosphere in a distant corner of the galaxy, a temporary accumulation of star dust, once was nothing, will again be nothing, is nothing now but electrochemical pulse and biological striving, a flicker in the web of being.

– Roy Scranton (2018 p.316)

The term Anthropocene in its current sense was first proposed in 2000 by scientists Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer to denote significant human action on natural world systems. Crutzen and Stoermer claimed that the term reflected 'impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere' and emphasised 'the central role of mankind in geology and ecology' (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000, p. 17).
The Anthropocene epoch, although as yet not officially ratified, is widely understood to mark an era in which human actions have significantly impacted the planet. It proclaims 'a new cultural and physical space that has not previously been experienced' (Robin & Muir 2015) and as such requires a rapid paradigm shift. The project *Affect and the Anthropocene: The Art Artefact and Ecological Grief* addresses some of the questions emerging from these new spaces with particular focus on climate change induced experiences of 'ecological grief' (Cunsolo & Ellis 2018, p.275) and 'solastalgia' (Albrecht et al. 2007, p. S95).
The project actively engages with process as a significant metaphor, drawing on forms of material agency, considering the impact of human intervention and its limits, the entangled state of human, nature and object and the juxtaposition of human culpability and vulnerability in this contested era. Visually these qualities are evoked through landscape-oriented artefacts which draw on personal imaginings and real-life events to undermine the narrative of human control and express a sense of precarity, dystopian futures, futility and loss. New materialism informs the research methodology which insists on a non-dualist position, an assemblage of artist and materials. These processes are utilised in the research to suggest ideas of threat and uncertainty, the competing narratives of control and agency, and explore a psychological and a speculative biological re-ordering of the relationship between

humans and nature in response to momentous threat. With reference to the theories of Glenn Albrecht, Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville Ellis, Clive Hamilton, Jane Bennett, Karen Barad, Naomi Klein and Roy Scranton amongst others, key concepts that have emerged from the Anthropocene space are psychological effects such as solastalgia and ecological grief, the entangled human–nature relationship expressed through the agency and combinations of materials, and process as metaphor. Artists who inform the project include Anselm Kiefer, Jeff Mincham, Abbas Akhavan, Zina Swanson, Fiona Hall and Hayden Fowler.

This research contributes to Anthropocene discourse by reaching beyond a scientific and geological framework to recognise the importance of understanding, as Bostic and Howey claim, that 'other disciplines necessarily come into play when we broaden inquiry to understanding the profound shifts the Anthropocene presents for human and natural history' (Bostic & Howey 2017, p.105). Hulme asserts that the sciences alone are ill-equipped for 'engaging with and articulating the deeper human search for values, purpose and meaning' required in response to Anthropocene challenges such as climate change (Hulme 2011, p.179) necessitating engagement with disciplines such as the creative arts in this role. Responding to the tensions of this somewhat contested epoch and its extensive influence on creative practice, the research addressed methods for engaging with and visually responding to this unstable and unprecedented era, a time in which Masco calls for 'new points of orientation' for us 'vulnerable, if hyperactive earth dwellers' (Masco 2015). Braidotti suggests an 'all-pervasive paranoia: the constant threat of the imminent disaster' under which we presently function, which has led to 'melancholia' thriving as a 'dominant mood and a mode of relation' (Braidotti 2009, p.42-43)

The question as to the role the art artefact and the process of its creation plays in expressing emotion and acknowledging, legitimising and making sense of human fears of powerlessness and futility in an era characterised by slow violence, uncertainty and loss of control is addressed visually and theoretically through this research.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

In the changing world of the Anthropocene era, beset by wicked problems, this practice-based research project considers the role of the art artefact and the process of its creation in voicing the Anthropocene and its ramifications and acknowledging and legitimising human fears of powerlessness and futility. I consider the power of art to express and validate emotion and position adaptation and acceptance as narratives of response to the reality, and psychological effects, of a traumatised world. In examining these feelings and attributes, studio processes are informed by new materialist ideas of anti-dualism. As Schadler states: "there is no outside position and no (human) position…All positions, entities and processes are already inside…the 'assemblage' (Braidotti 2002) hence immanent to the process"(Schadler 2017, p.216) The notion of an assemblage, in this case of artist and materials, reflects the changed relationship between human and nature in the Anthropocene which informs this project, from a perceived separateness to a realisation of the entangled state of all things, a rejection of nature as other and of the impacts of climate change as disconnected from the human and human activities. Process explores uncertainty and a metaphorical loss of control by humanity in the face of an all-powerful nature while at the same time revealing a long-denied connectedness. The manifestation of these ideas in the creative work is discussed further in Chapter 5. In addressing both physical world and human emotional effects of the Anthropocene era (particularly climate change) through painting and sculpture I adopt process as metaphor, embracing toxicity, inundation, rupture and repair. I include language and its materiality as part of this methodology.

The actions of making preliminary studies in text, archiving, the abstraction of loss and the thoughts aroused by this process directed the project toward ideas of speaking of the Anthropocene through emotional response and psychological effects resulting from the impact of climate change. In part this arose from a perceived lack of modes of visual expression of this idea. The paper situates the project primarily through the usage of process as metaphor and a discussion of methods by which art artefacts may express emotion resonating with human psychological response, stemming from and mirroring negative impacts on the planet. As part of this

discussion I posit a changed relationship between human and nature in the Anthropocene as a precursor to forms of environment-related distress. In speculating on affect in this era, I question how emotional response may take material form and how this may guide human adaptation.

This exegesis is comprised of five chapters which detail and analyse the concepts and processes underpinning the project. My research, as detailed in Chapter 1, defines the Anthropocene, broaches the subjects of the inequity of culpability, the impacts of both climate change scepticism and the insidious nature of climate change itself and incorporates a discussion of early works, considerations of which activated the key focus of the project. Chapter 2 explains why my work is not protest art and why activism is not a driver of this project, introduces affect and adaptation and examines how art practice can contribute to Anthropocene discourse particularly as a means of expressing psychological responses. Chapter 3 elaborates on specific psychological effects of climate change—solastalgia and ecological grief—resulting from a changed relationship between human, nature and place in the Anthropocene era. Chapter 4 draws on ideas of the sublime and human/non-human entanglement. In this chapter the importance of process as metaphor in the project's studio work is introduced and methods by which assemblages, materials and studio practice reflect emotional responses to climate change are discussed. Chapter 5 takes a more in-depth approach to analysis of the studio methodology and process through a new materialist lens, drawing specific connections between the themes and some of the key artefacts. These works are examined in greater detail, with reference to formal properties in relation to process. I further elaborate on how artworks may elicit emotional response. The paper concludes with a summing up of the project's material outcomes and findings and potential future directions in the field.

Chapter 1

They speak of the shock of being forsaken by an earth or an ocean or a sky whose sustaining presence they once trusted.

– Nigel Clark (2010 pp.xx-xxi)

Figure 1: Catherine Phillips, *Precarity series*, 2018, oil, enamel and ink on canvas, 80cm x 90cm

This chapter defines the Anthropocene and key issues attached to this term and details early research which sought to narrow the project's initial broad focus on creatively articulating responses to the Anthropocene era. This early research demonstrates the influences and ideas which fed into the project's key foci.

The Anthropocene and Culpability

Although the introduction of the term Anthropocene is generally attributed to scientists Stoermer and Crutzen, it was first used in the 1920s by Soviet geologist Aleksei Pavlov to describe 'a new geological period in which humanity was the main driver of planetary geologic change.' (Foster, in Angus 2016, p. 2) In the current era as ecosystem scientist Yadvinder Malhi suggests:

> The core concept that the term is trying to capture is that human activity is having a dominating presence on multiple aspects of the natural world and the functioning of the Earth system, and that this has consequences for how we view and interact with the natural world—and perceive our place in it. (Malhi 2017, p. 78)

In August 2016, at the 35th International Geological Congress, the Working Group on the Anthropocene voted by a resounding majority to work towards formal ratification of this new epoch. The title 'Anthropocene' originates from the combination of the suffix *-cene* from the Greek *kainos* (recent) and *Anthropos* (human) (Angus 2015, p.231) and is defined as 'the idea that human activity is a force acting upon the Earth system in ways that mean that Earth will be altered for millions of years' (Lewis & Maslin 2016). This definition equates elements of humanity[1] with a 'geophysical force' (Emmett & Lekan 2016, p. 7) and raises the conflicted issues of culpability and vulnerability.

> A force of this magnitude is like the cyanobacteria that breathed oxygen into our atmosphere over 2.5 billion years ago, making life as we know it possible, or the asteroid that triggered the extinction of the dinosaurs 66 million years ago. (Emmett & Lekan 2016, p. 7)

According to Dipesh Chakrabarty in his address to the Tanner Lectures in Human Values, scientists were quick to acknowledge the inequity of culpability, revealing that climate change was:

> … anthropogenic in nature and what was worse, it was going to affect the poor of the world more than the rich, who were much more responsible for the emission of excessive greenhouse gases. (Chakrabarty 2015, p. 139)

Indeed, the inequity of climate change "blame" is a frequently cited as an objection to the adoption of the term Anthropocene for the present era. As Simon Hailwood states, the Anthropocene label:

> … itself suggests a dualist picture that focuses on the agency of an exclusive, particularly 'enterprising' and powerful subset of humanity – Anthropos as such – as if all humanity were equally involved in and responsible for the socio-economic, political and technological developments of the early

[1] It is acknowledged that not all sections of humanity are equal drivers of this 'force'.

> Industrial Revolution or the Great Acceleration as the case may be. (Hailwood 2016, p. 57)

Settler practices of farming and their results, including deforestation, destruction of habitats and the negative effects on biodiversity, in comparison to the land use practices of indigenous nations can be cited as a further example of allocating disproportionate blame. As Native American academic Laura Hall claims:

> As vitally important as it is to take on the human and ecological challenges facing our species as a result of environmental degradation, perspectives that do not seek to understand the Creation stories and truths of Indigenous Peoples globally — and which pin evolutionary nihilism equally on all groups involved throughout time and history — exacerbate existing ecologically damaging colonial relationships. (Hall 2015, p. 288)

As capitalist society seeks to understand and adapt to the challenges of Anthropogenic climate change, it must it be recognised that culpability regarding its causes is not equally shared. The parameters of this project cannot extend to an analysis of this important issue and instead the term Anthropocene is adopted as a descriptor for a new era in which past assumptions of how the natural world and its global citizens will function cannot be upheld. As Robin and Muir claim:

> To assert that the planet has moved beyond the Holocene is to assert that humanity (indeed all life) has entered a new cultural and physical space that has not previously been experienced. (Robin & Muir 2015)

Climate Change Scepticism

Engaging with this new space is urgent, but problematic in the face of widespread denial of the changing world. Early research broadly considered aspects of the Anthropocene and first sought to address the obtuse resistance to evidence on climate change which still permeates some of the highest levels of governance. Compelling information imparted by an increasingly vocal and vociferous scientific community has been met with illogical argument and dissemination of fake news. The website isthishowyoufeel.com (ITHYF) invites climate change researchers to

handwrite letters expressing their feelings on the topic. Professor Stefan Rahmstorf, Head of Earth Systems Analysis at the Potsdam Institute provided one of the more poignant and heartfelt responses (Figure 2) and quite a fitting analogy between science deniers and 'some mad person' (ITHYF n.d.). It reads:

Sometimes I have this dream.
I'm going for a hike and discover
a remote farm house on fire.
Children are calling for help from
the upper windows.
So I call the fire brigade.
But they don't come, because some
mad person keeps telling them that
it is a false alarm.
The situation is getting more and more
desperate, but I can't convince
the firemen to get going.
I cannot wake up from this nightmare.

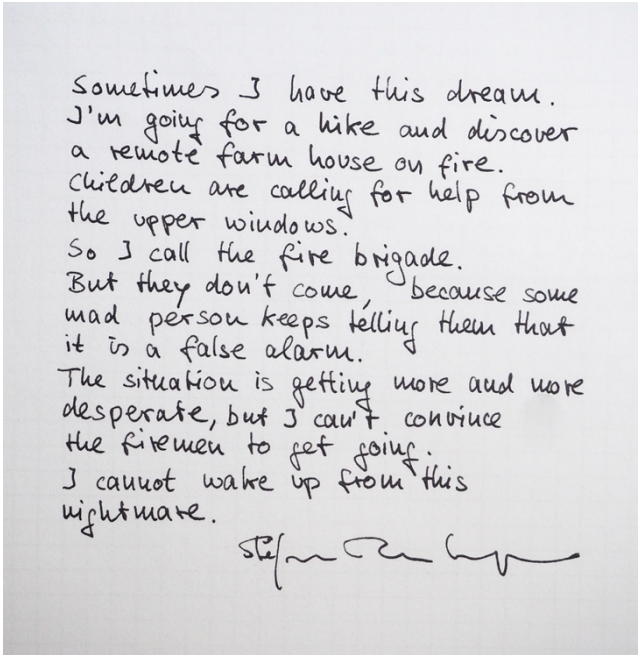

Figure 2: Professor Stefan Rahmstorf n.d., *Letter submitted to ITHYF website*

My first work of the project and the 2017 Powerhouse Gallery solo exhibition of the same name, *Fake News,* responded to this frustrating situation of denial through the usage of landscape symbols and text in painting to create a dialogue between the opposing voices of fact and fallacy. Two further iterations of the piece were exhibited at the University of Tasmania's Plimsoll Gallery and the School of Contemporary Art Inveresk campus open day. The work covered several panels of varying size and orientation which were intended to suggest protest signs, representative of the usual activist focus of art addressing environmental issues. It extended beyond the wall and onto the floor to create a boundless landscape. The symbols selected referenced orienteering mapping codes and lines in an attempt to avoid classification of the landscape through a pictorial genre (beautiful, sublime, picturesque) and in an attempt to remove emotive elements from the landscape and metaphorically from the debate. These marks also speak of navigation through unknown territory, metaphors for our current position in a changing world. The imagined landscape was overlaid with text, painted in black and white. Black text consisted of actual fake news statements sourced from social media, its misinformation and lies painted in a thicker and darker tone representative of the strength of denial. Thin white markings spelling out scientific consensus on climate change created a third layer and depicted the impermeability and strength of well-supported fallacy. The intent is that the text cannot be fully read, frustratingly providing the viewer with an incomplete conversation. This method of presentation asserts the non-activist stance of the project, i.e. there is no didactic language, yet it serves to prompt critical thinking on its subject.

Further text works responded to Scranton's 2015 book *Learning to die in the Anthropocene* in which he succinctly sums up his view on the fate of humanity: 'We're fucked. The only questions are how soon and how badly' (Scranton 2015, p. 16). This phrase and the attitude of resignation behind it epitomises the themes of futility and reluctant acceptance in the face of overwhelming, unstoppable threat which run throughout this project. An acrylic on paper work borrowing the opening lines of Scranton's quote was exhibited in a group show at Powerhouse Gallery. Text to convey conflicting dialogue was again utilised in this work, overlaying a geology-inspired painted surface and with the addition of Scranton's words in gold leaf referencing gold deposits within the earth and also speaking of consumerist society.

Scranton developed his attitude of acceptance and adaptation during his time as a soldier in Iraq, in his words:

> To survive as a soldier, I had to learn to accept the inevitability of my own death. For humanity to survive in the Anthropocene, we need to learn to live with and through the end of our current situation. (Scranton 2015, p. 22)

Text as material

These early approaches formed part of the project's key methodology, adopting process as metaphor, in this case in part through usage of text as a material to speak of a confusing, incomplete and unequal debate. Dhillon, in her discussion of 'text as a material, a subject and a conceptual device' recounts an interpretation of Edgar Allen Poe's *The fall of the House of Usher* in which the house ruptures and collapses suggesting that the 'physical structure of the house is a metaphor for the mental state' (assumed to be madness) of its occupants (Dhillon 2017, p. 245). In the initial stages of my research the idea of distortion of scientific fact was a key area of interest. I began this project by utilising text as a material to transmit aspects of the difficulty in communicating climate change information beyond a scientific realm and in distinguishing reality from 'fake news'. Contention, dominance, ineffectuality, omission and non-disclosure were metaphorically expressed through text in several of the project's early works, with the use of oppositional colours, strength or weakness of painted line, and deletion or obscuring of letters, all representative of a theme of these works. In this way text can be seen as a material tool with which the artist may communicate visually beyond its more usual rigid structure of ordered letters. Text or more generally words/language in some form are what humanity predominantly uses to communicate and make sense of the world, however the materiality of text allows it to be manipulated just as traditional artist materials of paints, varnishes and inks may be controlled and engineered to produce a desired visual outcome. My interest in text-based work also stemmed from an early introduction to and enjoyment of reading. Despite incorporating text as media to express 'fake news' I find the concept of the manipulation and distortion of scientific fact and the unreliability of language unsettling. A recently published study (March 2018) entitled *The spread of true and false news online* found that 'falsehood …

reached far more people than the truth' (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral 2018, p. 3) primarily due to the 'novelty' value (Vosoughi et al. 2018, p. 4) of the false statement. I undertook my own research into how climate change news statements could be identified and analysed, i.e. legitimate/fake, neutral/biased, or as engendering particular emotions, e.g. fear, anger, sadness and how this may be visually expressed. Studies in the field have primarily focused on categorising statements as basically being for or against a given position or 'recognising valence' (Aman & Szpkowicz 2007, p.196), however Saima Aman and Stan Szpakowicz delved further into the topic in their paper 'Identifying expressions of emotion in text', suggesting six common emotional categories 'happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, surprise and fear' to explore and analyse blog posts. They also identified 'seed words' which fed into each category, for example 'afraid', 'scared', and 'panic' contributed to the dataset for *fear* (Aman & Szpkowicz 2007, p.198).

Over a period of four months, I analysed a series of social media articles and reader comments pertaining to climate change in a similar manner, with a focus on the language of emotions expressed within them. From this study I compiled a list of prevalent emotive words and phrases and created a text work using these words. After further questioning the power of language as material I came to hold the view that simple emotive words were unnecessary when facts alone held substantial weight and impact. The language of climate change has become by necessity blunt and outspoken and less couched in optimism. A recent paper (August 2018) entitled *What lies beneath: On the understatement of climate change risks* included the following unequivocal statement, '[c]limate change is an existential risk to human civilisation: that is, an adverse outcome that would either annihilate intelligent life or permanently and drastically curtail its potential' (Spratt & Dunlop 2018, p. 13). Spratt and Dunlop quote the Global Challenges Foundation in stating that '[i]f climate change was to reach 3°C, most of Bangladesh and Florida would drown' and at this point conservative projected temperature rise even if *voluntary* emission targets set in Paris are met, 'would result in planetary warming of 3.4°C by 2100' (Spratt & Dunlop 2018, p. 13). In addition to the growing usage of more direct language, another important aspect of climate change communication is the closing of the gap between now and the future. The year 2100 no longer seems beyond the concern of present-day citizens of the planet. At the time of writing this paper, a child born today

will hold the expectation of existing in the world of 2100. Such a scenario heightens the impact of climate change in a direct and emotive way as the present is connected to a *visible* future reality in the form of a living child or grandchild.

2℃

Figure 3: Catherine Phillips, *2℃,* 2018, text projection, dimensions variable.

Investigations into the weight of text culminated in the identification of one key symbol which to me encompassed and signified a range of key meanings—2℃. An increase in global temperature of less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial global average temperature levels was identified as an agreed goal by signatories to the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. The IPCC recently released a report finding that 1℃ of global warming is already causing a multitude of changes including more extreme weather, rising sea levels and diminishing Arctic sea ice. For the duration of this project, 'below 2℃' has been an oft-repeated benchmark, a mantra chanted over and over by politicians, scientists, theorists and the media. There is even an organisation named The 2° Institute which aims to empower people to 'keep global warming below 2° Celsius' (The 2° Institute 2018). As an example of the weakening of this much vaunted aspiration, the latest IPCC report predicts that 'virtually all' coral reefs would be lost with a temperature rise of 2℃ (IPCC 2018, p.1) Such a finding reconfigures this initial marker of relative safety as a portent of doom. As per Figure 3, I considered either projecting this temperature level onto various surfaces within the gallery, (including onto water as a key motif) or printing onto a clear acrylic panel suspended in front of one of the paintings, merging the text and imagery, overlaying the landscape with a human-induced emblem of intervention. I am prone to literal interpretations of ideas in art practice and decided that in the context of this project, the imagery created through the paintings and sculptures more closely adheres to its concerns and ethos, however this remains an area of interest which may inform future projects.

Figure 4: Catherine Phillips, *Fake News*, 2017, acrylic on board, dimensions variable

Figure 5: Catherine Phillips, *We're Fucked*, 2017, acrylic, ink and gold leaf on watercolour paper, 42cm x 60cm

'Slow Violence' and the Archive of Loss

The 'new space' (Robin & Muir 2015) in which we now find ourselves is, as suggested through the symbolism of the early text works, not only difficult to navigate but also largely speculative, with science on the subject limited to presenting likely scenarios and not certainties. Although sometimes referred to as climate *chaos,* climate *crisis*, or more recently climate *disruption*, I feel that Anthropogenic climate *change* is a term which more accurately reflects one of the main impediments to acceptance of the gravity of the problem, the insidious progression of the effects which Nixon perceptively refers to as 'slow violence' (Nixon 2011, p. 2) While change-induced acute weather events are apocalyptic in essence, other damaging products of climate change such as extinction and ecosystem collapse progress slowly and even unobserved until it is too late. (*Slowly* is of course relative and when

compared to the pre-Industrial Revolution rate, the pace of change has escalated dramatically.) As previously noted, in 2015 at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, delegates agreed to attempt to address climate change, with the key outcome being an agreement to work towards keeping global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial global average temperature levels and ideally below 1.5. This aim is beginning to appear out of reach, as Raftery et al. state, '[t]he likely range of global temperature increase is 2.0–4.9 °C, with median 3.2 °C and a 5% (1%) chance that it will be less than 2 °C (1.5 °C)' with 'the effect of mitigation emission policies' already factored in (Raftery, Zimmer, Frierson, Startz & Liu 2017, p. 1). At the time of writing, (October 2018) an IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report has just been released. The Co-Chair of the IPCC Working Group, Panmao Zhai, advised that the report found 'we are already seeing the consequences of 1 °C of global warming through more extreme weather, rising sea levels and diminishing Arctic sea ice, among other changes' (IPPC 2018, p. 1).

My second area of research considered an example of one such creeping catastrophe, as described above, sea level rise. As explained on the US National Ocean Service website, climate change driven factors contributing to sea level rise include the warming of oceans. This causes seawater to expand, 'taking up more space in the ocean basin and causing a rise in water level' (NOAA 2018). In addition, melting ice feeds into the ocean, contributing to the rise (NOAA 2018). Living in the island state of Tasmania, with water and coastline being dominant features of my personally experienced landscapes over the years, also influenced my decision to explore local areas where sea level rise has been predicted to have significant effects. Tasmania has a number of low-lying coastal areas which will be impacted by a resulting projected rise. Sea level rise planning allowances for Tasmania were produced by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in 2016 as recommended by the Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian Climate Change Office. The allowances—calculated through formulae and statistics and based on IPCC projections of emissions levels—aim to provide information for stakeholders in coastal areas regarding the likelihood of future infrastructure damage through rising levels. These current allowances are calculated in relation to levels measured in 2010 and are set at 'for 2050, 0.2 metres

… and for 2100, 0.8m' (Department of Premier and Cabinet Tasmanian Climate Change Office, 2012, p. 4) and have been devised by Dr John Hunter of the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre. An allowance is defined by Hunter as 'the amount by which something, such as the height of coastal infrastructure, needs to be altered to cope with climate change' (Hunter 2011, p. 1).

Ideas of changed coastlines led to a body of creative research which spoke of the significance of archiving, values invested in objects, methods of inventory and permutations of loss. It considered what is covered and hidden when water levels rise and the values we place on objects and the non-human when they become rare, scarce or face extinction. As a result, I undertook field trips to several local Tasmanian low-lying river's edge locations susceptible to inundation. Having worked with resin during my Honours year, I felt that its association with the preservation of scientific specimens made it a highly relevant material to use in this area of exploration. These early ideas of archiving were tested through attempts at making casts of the water's edge (Tamar River, Launceston and Rubicon River, Port Sorell). Field trips to Port Sorell led to the idea of the Wunderkammer, and the creation of a collection of 'curiosities' found along the shoreline. These found materials and objects (which included dead birds, crabs, fish, plant matter, rocks, shells, seaweed and driftwood) were contained in a wooden box with a hinged lid and the box was filled with resin. This piece aimed to reflect the ideas of archiving, value and loss of visibility, framed in relation to sea level rise and its impacts along susceptible coastlines and speaking of the wider impacts of this phenomenon on a global scale. This work formed part of an installation at Sawtooth ARI Gallery in 2017.

Figure 6: Catherine Phillips, *Wunderkammer*, 2017, wooden box, dead birds, crab body parts, fish, plant matter, rocks, shells, cuttlefish, seaweed, bone, driftwood, 45cmx70cm

Investigating ideas of archiving led to a change of direction as I began to consider why society preserves objects and for whom such relics are kept. Yeo states that archives are important as they 'provide evidence of and information about the actions of their creators and the environment in which those actions occurred … and play a critical role in maintaining awareness of how the present is shaped by the past' (Yeo, in Forde 2007, p. xi). However, I situate this project within a discourse of speculation that humanity will eventually face extinction, and in light of such a scenario ultimately there will be no-one to view such collections of objects or draw conclusions from them. Hope, rather than firm fact drives any speculation otherwise. As Salinger suggests, 'whilst there is [*sic*] enough good and committed people we can change our path of warming. I am always hopeful – but 4 to 5 degrees Celsius of change will be a challenge to survive' (ITHYF n.d.). I am not confident that emissions will be restricted sufficiently to limit warming to sub 5 degrees as the baseline scenario suggests that 'in the absence of policies, global warming is expected to reach 4.1 °C – 4.8 °C above pre-industrial by the end of the century' (Climate Action Tracker 2017) and any reduction in this rise is dependent upon governments sticking to their emission reduction promises. Even with such flimsy guarantees, as of November 2017 these 'unconditional pledges … would limit warming to about 3.16°C' (Climate Action Tracker 2017).

I concluded that creating archival works did not express the key views underpinning the project, as acknowledging and foregrounding worst-case scenarios as this project intends, predicates no future human viewer of such an accumulation of objects. This depressing thought brought the project a step closer to considerations of emotion and climate change which came to form the key focus and which are explored later in the paper.

Bostrom and Cirkovic classify climatic change as a 'global catastrophic risk' which they define as 'a risk that might have the potential to inflict serious damage to human well-being on a global scale' (Bostrom & Cirkovic 2008, p. 1). The most serious of these, they claim, is an 'existential risk', one that could 'cause the extinction of Earth-originating intelligent life or to reduce its quality of life … permanently and drastically' (Bostrom & Cirkovic 2008, p. 4). They also recognise, as does Nixon when he speaks of 'slow violence', the relevance of temporality to that risk, as while climate

change is a concerning threat to life in the future, right now to a great extent it is business as usual for most of humanity:

> Climate change from greenhouse gas emissions poses no significant globally catastrophic risk now or in the immediate future (on the timescale of several decades); the concern is about what effects these accumulating emissions might have over the course of many decades or even centuries. (Bostrom & Cirkovic 2008 p. 5)

While the slow climb of emissions levels means that for some elements of society climate change impacts are gradual and hidden, for others these forces are severely felt in the present. As already suggested, one of the most damaging is sea level rise. After considering and rejecting archiving, I undertook further research into ideas of what will be lost and what is already hidden and may be uncovered through melting and as a result of rising sea levels. These speculations led to the viewing of film recorded from beneath the Antarctic ice, revealing a world of surprisingly vibrant colour.

Figure 7: Catherine Phillips, *Beneath*, 2017, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 20cm x 24cm

Footage of flourishing plant life as well as images of coral reefs before and after the devastating changes wrought by warming and bleaching inspired several small acrylic, resin and other media studies. These small studies are representative of remnants of oceans unsullied by human interference. While these were not pursued at large scale, they sparked early ideas of creating imagery which spoke of an inevitable and inconsolable loss.

To further explore the emotional impact of climate change and how the art artefact may express this, I began to create paintings and sculptures which spoke of a landscape of bleakness and devastation. Through research into emotional responses to climate change effects, I came to consider how such created scenes metaphorically mirrored the emotional state of those who responded to the potential ramifications of Anthropogenic climate change with a form of grief and a sense of despair. I also came to understand how such emotions are not conducive to positive responses to the call for action which frequently forms a major component of art works on environmental subjects in this era, therefore in the final section of this chapter I explain why activism is not part of this project's focus.

Climate Activism

Within Anthropocene discourse, across a range of disciplines there is a predominant focus on inciting action or communicating an environmental message to the viewer. This is frequently assumed to be the sole impetus for the creation of art with an environmental orientation. This project asserts that art addressing the impact of sections of society on the planet cannot be confined to purely activist motivations as this fails to recognise the debilitating and disabling psychological effects of facing insurmountable threat. I engage with multiple expressions of a comparatively under-represented genre of art artefact, ecologically based art that does not function as a didactic tool and does not set out to wake a society jaded by catastrophic imagery and 'perpetual scare tactics' (Davidson 2015, p. 10). I reject what I categorise as the 'awareness trope' perpetuating climate change discourse, a motif which suggests that society is oblivious and/or complacent solely through ignorance of the phenomenon's existence and that the role of art in the Anthropocene is confined to a call to action. Instead, I refuse to project hope and intentionally aim to cultivate a sense of disturbance and turmoil in the paintings and bleakness and futility in the sculptures, using colour palette, imagery and evocation, positioning the works as a speculative commemoration of a civilisation that is '*already dead*' (Scranton 2013, p. 6). This research is significant in that its ideas and their expression serve as a counterpoint to a predominance of art with an environmental focus fixating primarily on perpetuating human control. In highlighting the psychology of the Anthropocene and its effects, this project suggests the need for alternative coping strategies and validates the views of a growing number of individuals in society immobilised by the

magnitude of the terrifying and increasingly insurmountable problems of the Anthropocene era.

Figure 8: Catherine Phillips, *Sea Level*, 2017, oil, enamel and ink on yupo paper, 25cm x 35cm

As a child, natural and human-made disasters, beamed via television into my relatively safe childhood world, generated such altruistic responses as backyard concerts and neighbourhood cake sales. Teenage years saw me writing to prisoners of conscience in Russia, joining socialist movements, participating in passive protest marches and listening to punk music which expressed everything wrong with the world. A long-standing concern for environmental and social causes in part served as initial motivation to undertake this project. This early impetus was compounded by a growing realisation that negative impacts on the planet cannot be mitigated without major changes; a complete transformation of energy usage at a major corporate level, to name one. I struggle to accept that this is a likely outcome and this view is supported by numerous commentators. As Klein claims:

> There are ways of preventing this grim future, or at least making it a lot less dire. But the catch is that these also involve changing everything. For us high consumers, it involves changing how we live, how our economies function, even the stories we tell about our place on earth. (Klein 2014, p. 3)

This view is also supported by Cuomo who suggests that the origins of climate change are in ‘powerful and deeply entrenched economic and social norms and practices’ (Cuomo 2011, p. 692) and Scranton who suggests that much of society is living ‘a life we can’t sustain’ (Scranton 2013, p. 7). Moreover, Ross asks:

> Does anyone really believe that it is possible to ‘solve’ the problems of climate change, habitat destruction and cultural destruction without addressing the consumerist basis of the present macro-economic system, or vice versa, or without addressing the way in which this system depletes the psychic energy required to find the collective will, belief, hope and reason to address this planetary challenge? (Ross in Stiegler 2018, p.12)

Many of those who accept the inevitability of the planet’s ‘grim future’ being one in which, as Klein claims, ‘major cities will very likely drown, ancient cultures will be swallowed by the seas, and there is a very high chance that our children will spend a great deal of their lives fleeing and recovering from vicious storms and extreme droughts’ (Klein 2014, p. 3) are swamped by overwhelming feelings of powerlessness and despair, rendering them unable to act or to make sense of this new world where previous certainties are called into question. In a world in which ‘our social horizon is war-ridden and death bound’ (Braidotti 2009, p. 43) Braidotti speaks of a ‘resignation and passivity that ensue from being hurt, lost and dispossessed’ and ‘the paralysis brought about by pain’ (Braidotti 2008, p.22). She suggests that activism has been ‘replaced by rituals of public collective mourning’ (Braidotti 2009, p. 42). Although Braidotti posits that political agency ‘consists of multiple micro-political practices of daily activism or interventions, in and on the world we inhabit’ (Braidotti 2009, p. 46) for many individuals even such minor pro-active responses are either impossible or deemed futile, necessitating adaptive strategies which reduce the negative psychological effects on the individual. These ideas and an analysis of their visual expression are expanded in the following chapters.

Chapter 2

… the Anthropocene is primarily a sensorial phenomenon: the experience of living in an increasingly diminished and toxic world.

– Heather Davis & Etienne Turpin (2015 p.3)

Figure 9: Catherine Phillips, *Precarity series*, oil, enamel and ink on canvas, 60cm x 86cm

The world in which we live has slowly advanced towards a state which would previously have been the subject of speculative fiction. Instead of *envisaging* dystopia there are currently cultures *living* versions of it, as sea levels rise and obliterate their homes, increasingly extreme weather events destroy their livelihoods and property, and debilitating heat waves kill them. This project moves beyond the slow build to an 'end of days' scenario and presents sculptures and imagery depicting dystopian futures, not only based on personal imaginings, but on real, current events. Trexler suggests, '[f]or most of its cultural existence, climate change was imagined as a final disaster that could be endlessly deferred' (Trexler 2015, p.233). Scientific fact demonstrates that this is clearly no longer the case. In this project there is no attempt to awaken society to the need for change in its interactions with the natural world as in my view, and that of a growing number of commentators, this imperative is glaringly apparent. This project's concerns are with the aware in society who understand what mitigating actions must be undertaken and are broken by their belief that large-scale change will not occur, and small individual actions are not significant. This perceived sense of powerlessness has led to an underlying theme of futility running through the project's depictions of a post-

sustainable world. There is a recalcitrance of much of society to accept scientific consensus despite Anthropogenic climate change being 'increasingly embedded within everyday experience, [and] evoking strong mental and emotional responses' (Cunsolo & Ellis 2018, p. 275). Reser et al. suggest that it is understandable that the reality of climate change is contested due to what they state is "ambiguous risk information" (Reser, Morrissey & Ellul in Weissbecker 2011, p. 28) (but what I suggest is the *perceived* ambiguous nature of the facts) stating "[p]eople are motivated to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty" (Reser et al. in Weissbecker 2011, p. 28).

Many of those who do accept the facts rightly feel a sense of impotence when confronted by the magnitude of the problem. I believe it is simply not feasible that the level of global co-operation required to address emissions and to ensure investment in sustainable energy would ever eventuate. As Scranton explains, '[t]he very idea of a unified national political action toward a single goal seems farcical, and unified action on a global scale mere whimsy.' (Scranton 2018a). Indeed, multiple Australian politicians have fallen at the hand of the energy reform sword, most recently former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull who in August 2018 raised ire with conservatives through attempting to legislate emissions in accord with the Paris Agreement. Any attempt to take even minimal action to address climate change can be seen as a political death wish. Scientific consensus has established that the scale of damage perpetrated on the planet cannot be reversed yet the serious and verifiable nature of these findings has resulted in responses from correspondingly inadequate mitigating action to downright disbelief in the existence of climate change. In any case, awareness of facts does not necessarily predicate changes of attitude or action towards the immense problems of the Anthropocene. An Australian study by Bradley, Reser & Glendon found that 'knowledge of, attitudes towards and concerns about climate change often do not translate into pro-environmental behaviour or lifestyles.' (Bradley et al. in Kaniasty, Moore, Howard & Buchwald 2014, p. 34) and Krnel and Naglic's comparison between Slovenian eco-schools and standard schools demonstrated that 'environmental knowledge does not result in greater awareness and environmentally responsible behaviour' (Krnel & Naglic 2009, p. 5) The sheer scale of lifestyle adaptations required to address the issues is prohibitive when society is ultimately reliant on destructive actions in order to maintain a

dependence on the burning of fossil fuels. Government inaction towards addressing climate change reflects the entrenched nature of carbon-dependent lifestyles as Alastair McIntosh suggests:

> … now that the carbon crunch is hitting mainstream consciousness, those politicians who seek re-election know that they must be very careful about how to act upon the urgency with which scientific advice indicates cold turkey (McIntosh in Skrimshire 2010, p. viii)

Fight or Flight

This project recognises and highlights the devastating negative emotional effects of Anthropogenic climate change, however much of society at large is imbued with an inherent optimism based on a belief in the indomitability of the species. Segal suggests that '[t]hese utopian instincts are strengthened by a historical data point obvious to all: our species has survived every obstacle we've encountered, and we are still here' (Segal 2017, p. 126). A confliction within society between belief and denial, optimism and pessimism, action and apathy led me to suggest that considerations of climate change generate two primary and polar forms of reaction which can be viewed in terms of the physiological stress response fight or flight. This experience is also classified by the term hyperarousal, 'a physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival' as identified by American physiologist Cannon (Berczi 2018). For the purposes of this project, fight represents activism and flight serves to suggest denial. Furthermore, the comparatively lesser known fight-flight-freeze response adds a relevant element – *freeze*, which speaks to the disabling effects of climate change. (Berczi 2018) As compelling facts mount as to the future of the planet and its systems as a result of human impact, a pervading and increasing inability to envisage a positive future permeates much of society. The planet has already moved beyond any imagined 'tipping point' and this shocking cognisance, as discussed previously, rather than inciting action has instead had a paralysing effect and promoted denial in the face of scientific consensus. As Collings states in *Stolen future, broken present: The human significance of climate change*:

> If we *do* accept the reality of climate change, and our responsibility for causing most of it, that realisation is so *wounding*[2] that we may not wish to grapple with it any further. The prospect that the planet's future is in danger is most likely to fill us with anger, horror and desperate hope. (Collings 2014, p. 15)

Wounding is a powerful word in this context but one that I believe eloquently expresses the severity of the psychological impact of climate change. I feel that Collings's quote is highly evocative of the emotional states experienced by much of humanity, regardless of inequities in economic/social status. American artist and activist Jordan claims understanding is the basis of an emotional response leading to action:

> I'm trying to create these images that point toward comprehension of the issues so we begin to feel something, so it's not just an intellectual exercise. If we feel angry, or sad, or frightened, that is when we act decisively. (Jordan, in Lavars 2014)

However, in my view Collings's suggestion that individuals may be so 'wounded' by the thought of a threatened planet or viewing related imagery that they shut down and take no action is a valid assessment of emotional state and one which resonates with the ideas of this project. There are multiple studies into the psychological aspects of climate change and despite recognition of art as a catalyst for critical thinking and wide acceptance of art process as a therapeutic device, my investigations have uncovered a comparatively lesser body of research pertaining to the existence and relevance of art artefacts responding to the psychological effects of climate change and its full ramifications. More commonly artworks speaking of these concerns take a didactic and galvanising approach. After researching a diverse range of artists who respond to the environmental concerns of this era, I have found that artist representations of climate change and associated issues predominantly seek to raise awareness and push for positive action on environmental change, the 'fight' response I refer to. One such artist is Olafur Eliasson whose 2006 installation *Your waste of time* featured pieces of ice from the

[2] My emphasis on the word 'wounding'.

disintegration of Iceland's oldest and largest glacier presented in a combination white cube gallery/cool room setting. As McLellan describes, viewers were invited to touch the ice and 'this was an attempt by Eliasson to bring the visceral reality of human-driven climate change to the attention of the audience through a sensory engagement with ice' (McLellan 2017). While Eliasson claims that 'art does not show people what to do' (Eliasson 2016) he does believe that it can prompt action. He states that:

> … engaging with a good work of art can connect you to your senses, body and mind. It can make the world felt. And this felt feeling may spur thinking, engagement, and even action. (Eliasson 2016)

Eliasson also claims that 'art has great potential for changing the world and improving people's lives' (Benson 2015).

Figure 10: Olafur Eliasson, *Your waste of time*, 2006. Photo: Jens Ziehe

I fully support Eliasson's view that art can inspire personal mitigating actions such as recycling, commuting by bike or turning off household lights, however I stand by my assertion that even en masse, small personal western society contributions such as these will not change the world. Eliasson states that an emotional response to artwork can engage critical thinking and I also endorse this view and the importance of finding some personal meaning and coping strategies in frightening times. This project undertakes to pursue such an aim through art artefacts which endeavour to evoke affect, personal understanding and adaptation, without any expectations of action from the viewer.

As Anderson observes:

> Anthropocene narratives coming from the art world seem to be most potentially destructive when they propose to do something, further reinforcing an attitude of human dominance over the planet. Paradoxically, art initiatives that stimulate critical thinking rather than simulate action have the potential to be most constructive. (Anderson 2015, p. 339)

Many of David Maisel's photographic images focus on sites of environmental impact such as open-cut mines, however his priority is not the communication of an environmental message to the viewer. Maisel states 'I really don't want the work to be didactic. For me that's the death of the work of art — when it is attempting to tell you what to think, or it somehow answers the question for you' (Maisel, in Durant 2017).

Art is frequently touted as serving the purpose of prompting 'social change by producing knowledge and solidarity or simply raising awareness' (Martinique 2016) In my view, artwork narratives which speak of 'changing the world'—what Anderson describes as 'solutionist talk' (2015, p.341) —*can* be seen as valuable in their promotion of unity and knowledge, in generating feelings of empowerment, in activating the therapeutic nature of process, but regrettably ineffective in making significant concrete change. The perception of protest works driving the avoidance of this aspect in my project is that they seem to posit an 'easy fix'. In other words, they suggest that a) society is unaware that climate change exists, b) that if they were aware they would take some form of action, and c) this action would save the planet.

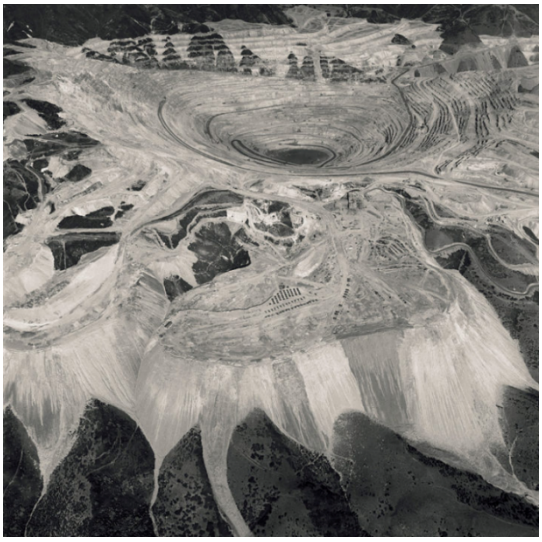

Figure 11: David Maisel, *Black Maps*, 1985, Bingham Canyon, UT, toned silver gelatin print, 36cm x 28cm

I concur with Anderson when she asserts that '[t]he ecological problems we face are not going to be solved by eco-art, representations of fake-nature or collections of plastic hybrids from polluted coastlines' (Anderson 2015, p.340) no matter how well-intentioned. I suggest that climate change will not be halted as a result of any art artefact, including those created as part of this project; the magnitude of the problem far exceeds the reach of even the most influential of artists. Instead there is high probability that they are not going to be solved *at all* and will gradually increase in severity. Just some of the long-term effects of climate change forecast by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are increased frequency, intensity and duration of heatwaves, risk of significant biodiversity and species loss, increased flash floods, erosion, glacial retreat, water stress, reduced agricultural yield and freshwater availability and the paradoxical extremes of increased flooding and drought (United States Geological Survey (USGS) n.d.).

Ecological Grief

Therefore, returning to the fight or flight motif introduced earlier, I suggest that broadly, the 'flight' and 'freeze' (retreat, deny, ignore, immobilisation) responses to the crisis of climate change as opposed to the more common activist 'fight' response must be equally validated. I suggest the former are responses to 'ecological grief', defined as 'the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species, ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to acute

or chronic environmental change' (Cunsolo & Ellis 2018, p. 275) Such psychological experiences are aspects of climate change effects which can be addressed through the arts, as previously raised. There is a positioning by some commentators of a person with such a sense of emotional distress as apathetic, defeatist or a 'doomer'. Doomer is generally applied as a negative label, however its meaning is literally 'a prognosticator of doom' (Merriam Webster 2018) or more specifically in current terms, a person who believes that 'humanity is incapable of resolving human-society created global issues, e.g. by replacing oil with other energy sources' (Urban Dictionary 2018)—both positions appear quite reasonable in the present climate (no pun intended). The physiological responses of hyperarousal are uncontrollable by the individual, without assistance (medication, cognitive behavioural therapy) and climate distress is similar in this way to other more prominent forms of anxiety yet as Reser etal. suggest "climate change is more of a chronic environmental stressor" (Reser et al. in Weissbecker, 2011, p. 21). In her discussion of a 2016 US Global Change Research Program report, Weir states that 'people's anxiety and distress about the implications of climate change are undermining mental health and well-being' and cites as a key finding of the report that:

> Exposure to climate and weather-related natural disasters can result in mental health consequences such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. A significant proportion of people affected by those events develop chronic psychological dysfunction. (Weir 2016)

The above quote from Weir refers to people directly impacted by natural disasters, however through the ease of exposure (via screens) to these and other largely climate change induced tragedies, the impacts are also felt by those who merely view destruction from a distance.

The recent coverage of the effects of prolonged drought in areas of Australia is on the other hand a different scenario. It is an example of such a disaster tempered by distance for much of society, however individuals are likely to actively respond to such scenarios in a proactive manner as they perceive there to be available to them concrete and manageable solutions (they can donate a bale of hay for example) to make a difference. The problem is perceived to be short-term and solvable and

simply requiring a resilience of spirit that those who live off the land pride themselves in having. I suggest that debilitating psychological effects occur when there is a sense of powerlessness, lack of control, loss of hope and where no practical adaptive action can be taken to address an insurmountable problem.

Adaptation

The use of the term adaptation within climate change discourse generally refers to whole-community actions to address climate change effects and risks in a practical manner. The *National climate resilience and adaptation strategy*, released in 2015, lists eight 'adaptation and resilience initiatives' which primarily address physical infrastructure and resource management. The only reference to mental health in this document concerns the link between drought-affected communities and increased stress, anxiety and suicide in response to 'loss of income' and 'changed social roles (Department of the Environment and Energy 2015, p. 59). Psychological effects of climate change appear to be either largely unrecognised or non-prioritised at government policy level. In their 2014 study *Distress and Coping in Response to Climate Change* Bradley et al. define '**psychological adaptation**'[3] as

> a set of four cognitive, affective and behavioural responses to climate change: becoming more attentive to the issue, accepting climate change as a threat, adopting a problem-solving attitude and shifting values to a more "pro-environmental position". (Bradley et al. 2014, p. 35)

Within the context of this project, the art artefact may engender such adaptive responses, by portraying a dystopian landscape informed by current and speculative climate change events. In particular attentiveness and acceptance may occur through viewing works which visually highlight climate change and the threat it poses. This form of adaptation however in the short term perhaps causes more personal harm than good. As Bradley et al. found, psychological adaptation increased stress in individuals, at the same time motivating them to take mitigating actions towards attempting to halt climate change. (Bradley et al. 2014, p. 40). Focusing on the idea of acceptance of threat, a form of adaptation referred to above

[3] My emphasis

and resonating with the themes of this project, I suggest that exposure to interpretations of current and speculative climate change damage can validate the emotional response of the individual and assist in the construction of personal coping strategies.

An American taskforce studying the relationship between psychology and climate change suggests that processes of adaptation include, among others, 'sensemaking' and changed 'affective responses' (American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force on the Interface between Psychology and Global Climate Change 2009, p. 7). In the context of climate change, the APA defines psychological adaptation as 'internal adjustment to environmental changes and disruptions, through the management of individual's cognitive and emotional responses to perceived threats and changing circumstances' (APA Task Force 2009, p. 224). In psychological discourse, the affective response of an individual is basically their emotional response to an experience. Sensemaking is a term introduced by Weick (Weick 1995, p. xi) and is the way in which people understand and find meaning in their experiences. Ancona explains that:

> Sensemaking involves coming up with a plausible understanding—a map—of a shifting world; testing this map with others through data collection, action, and conversation; and then refining, or abandoning, the map depending on how credible it is. (Ancona 2012, p. 3)

This research posits that a suggested coping strategy of Bradley et al., (psychological adaptation) can be implemented through sensemaking and that this is a method by which the art artefact can contribute to Anthropocene discourse on the psychological effects of climate change. For the purposes of this research, the process of sensemaking is applied to viewing of art artefacts which aim to engender an *affective response* in the viewer. The individual's subjective experience and pre-existing attitudes will of course dictate their response to the work's imagery however formal elements and principles which attempt to induce response are applied. This is detailed in Chapter 5. As expressed through the fight or flight motif I have adopted, the art artefacts created through this project may well serve more than one function: the common role attributed to art speaking of environmental issues, in enlightening

people as to climate change impact as well as engendering a corresponding willingness to act in some way to address this. There are no negatives in that outcome. However, the intent of the work in visually expressing a dystopian planet, is to aesthetically define and voice the unknown, to stimulate the thoughts of the viewer, and cause *affect,* whereby they may begin to *make sense* of this new and troubling world. Sensemaking, as Ancona suggests, 'requires an articulation of the unknown, because, sometimes trying to explain the unknown is the only way to know how much you understand it' (Ancona 2012, p. 4). A key role of the artist is to provoke questions through the art artefact. Through questioning the imagery, subject matter, materials, colour palette and other elements, meaning is derived. Through this research I suggest an alternative conversation involving artworks responding to the Anthropocene, one which highlights the psychological well-being of the individual as opposed to one which aims to recruit soldiers for an unwinnable war.

Chapter 3

There are some who can live without wild things and some who cannot.

– Aldo Leopold (1949, p. vii)

Wounds

Cunsolo and Ellis suggest that 'ecological grief is a natural, though overlooked, response to ecological loss, and one that is likely to affect more of us into the future' (Cunsolo & Ellis 2018, p. 2). This project recognises the emotional toll on the individual and, as previously suggested, the comparatively smaller oeuvre of artworks responding to this aspect of Anthropogenic climate change. This project aims to metaphorically express, through a range of art artefacts, both the damage inflicted on the planet and psychological distress experienced by elements of humanity, draw correlations between them and facilitate adaptation through creating meaning. An article by Ellis and Cunsolo, 'Hope and mourning in the Anthropocene', led me to the writings of American ecologist Aldo Leopold. Leopold, a professor and influential voice in his field in the early 20th century, and the quote that follows from his book *A Sand County almanac*, inspired works considering denial, damage, wounds and wounding:

> One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise. (Leopold 1949, p. 197)

This quote aptly expresses the project's views on climate change through its expression of slow destruction, isolation, and denial. I discovered this passage of writing after having read sections of Collings's *Stolen future, broken present* (2014), quoted previously in this paper, which uses the term 'wounded' to describe emotional

reactions to climate change. I feel that these quotes resonate with work created as part of this investigation. Abstract landscape and geological studies in oil, enamel and ink depict temporal moments which have been ruptured by cutting and repaired by sewing, creating wound-like marks on the canvas surface. Small sutures of red thread traversing the landscape suggest at best, future scarring and at worst, the 'marks of death' (Leopold 1949, p. 197) and are metaphors for both the potential irreparable consequences of ineffectual mitigation efforts in addressing climate change and the psychological scarring of the individual.

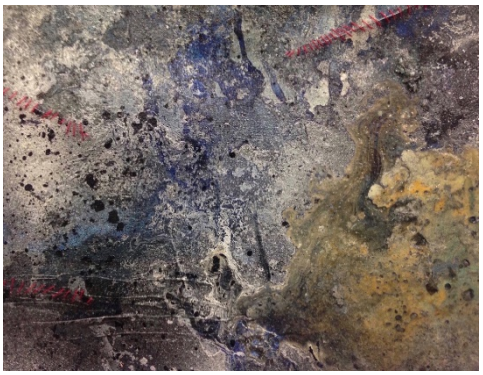

Figure 12: Catherine Phillips, *Wounded* (detail), 2018, oil, enamel, ink and thread on canvas, 20cm x 24cm

Figure 13: Catherine Phillips, *Wounded* (detail), 2018, oil, enamel, ink and thread on canvas, 20cm x 24 cm

I have photographed these works and had them digitally printed to aluminium. In this way they also express ideas of the Anthropos—human control over natural process and the earth as resource. *Wounded* is arranged in a unified grid formation, suggesting a harmonious relationship, with narrow separations serving to demarcate the small, individual territories of each landscape. As stated each component began as individual abstract landscape depictions in oil, ink and enamel on canvas, with most of the works including stitching in red thread. These small works have been

created through allowing and arresting fluid processes of inundation and flow, utilising these processes and their potentially toxic materials as metaphors for evidence of and contributors to climate change destruction.

Figure 14: Catherine Phillips, *Wounded*, 2018, digital print on brushed aluminium, 20cm x 24cm (9 units)

Sections of the resulting images on canvas were deliberately damaged by cutting with scissors, and repaired through sewing, representational of the hand of human control over natural processes, the belief of elements of humanity that the planet is an endless, regenerating resource at human disposal, and that damage inflicted in the course of this use can be rectified through limited and makeshift reparation. A metaphorical rupture and repair also speak of psychological processes of the individual in response to climate change. Stitching references the shape of mountain skylines or emulates marks and symbols which allow orienteers to navigate unknown terrain, symbolic of humanity's position of uncertainty regarding their future on the planet. Metal substrate shines through areas of these works and is obscured in others, speaking of pockets of bauxite ore layered beneath the earth's surface awaiting prospecting and human usage of the planet as resource. This work acknowledges and highlights the damage inflicted on the planet by elements of humanity, and the consequent effects on the psychological wellbeing of the individual. The works created throughout this project aim to evoke affect in the viewer, they may challenge the viewer's beliefs, they may confront, they may cause anxiety (the metaphoric rupture). Experiencing an emotional response to an installation concerned with the dire state of the planet allows a questioning and defining of the unknown which draws the viewer towards understanding and

adaptation (the repair). I view *Wounded* as more indirect and less confronting than some of the other works undertaken as part of this project and one which requires a closer reading in order to appreciate the subtleties of the stitched lines and the inherent meaning of the lines when linked to the title. Although this work acknowledges and highlights the damage inflicted on the planet by elements of humanity, and the consequent effects on the psychological wellbeing of the individual, the subtle tone of the landscape-oriented imagery softens the impact of the subject matter. I therefore sought to create works on a larger scale, where process, control, agency and turmoil reflecting the planet and human experience, were more in evidence.

Solastalgia

Another academic to acknowledge the relationship between planetary and human distress is Glenn Albrecht, a former professor at Murdoch University in WA. Albrecht invented the term 'solastalgia' to describe a somewhat inexplicable emotional response to negative impacts on the planet, 'the distress that is produced by environmental change impacting on people while they are directly connected to their home environment' (Albrecht, Sartore, Connor, Higginbotham, Freeman, Kelly, Stain, Tonna & Pollard 2007, p. S95). Albrecht describes solastalgia as a *psychoterratic* illness with the term's meaning derived from the Greek *psukhe*, meaning soul, spirit or breath and the Latin *terra,* referring to the earth (Online Etymology Dictionary 2018). As climate change impacts heighten, he predicts a corresponding increase in 'environmentally induced distress and illness' (Albrecht 2018). According to Albrecht this response to the loss of a sense of place can extend from an experience akin to mourning, to serious health issues and even death, as:

> So powerful is the connection between a loved place and the experience of negative transformation, that for some people, suicide is seen as the only form of relief from psychoterratic distress (particularly indigenous people). (Albrecht 2018)

In 2012 an exhibition responding to Albrecht's concept of solastalgia was held at the Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery. Curated by Daw, the exhibition *Life in Your Hands: art from solastalgia* aimed to spark debate on the subject, to engage with affected

communities and explore 'the potential for contemporary visual art, craft and design practice to contribute to debate and healing' (Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery Schools Education Resource 2012, p. 4). As exhibition curator Daw explained:

> … when change occurs for the worst, people can become disempowered and separated from the very place perceived as home. Physical and mental health may be affected: the result of an accumulation of adverse conditions. (Daw, 2012, p. 4)

There are similarities between the responses of artists selected for the *Life in Your Hands* exhibition and the approach taken in my project in that they have created work addressing environmental change (and other issues) which articulate a psychological concept (in this case, solastalgia). They have acknowledged the feelings of those experiencing it without using the exhibition to lay claim to contributing to the halting of climate change or to in some other way change the world. Instead they use their respective art processes to convey a sense of loss and alienation and to validate the oft unspoken emotion this produces in the individual and community.

As Albrecht explains:

> As the climate gets hotter, more hostile and unpredictable ... we seek solace wherever it is offered. Art and artists have a hugely important role in helping others understand what is going on in their surroundings. We all sense that something is wrong with the human–nature relationship but very few are able to 'see' what is happening. Art and craft help us see and react to what is often almost invisible and unspeakable. (Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery Exhibition Catalogue 2012, p. 8)

Figure 15: Jeff Mincham, *Full Moon – Dry Lake (No end in sight – ruin: January 2009)* (back and front), 2012, hand-built ceramic, multi-glazed and multi-fired, mid-fire, 40cm x 59cm x 11cm. Photography Michal Kluvanek © the artist

Ceramicist Jeff Mincham's work responded to the significant devastation which had occurred in the landscape of South Australia's Lake Alexandrina region over the preceding decade, an 'enormous transition' where for the residents 'the world was changed, it was wiped out and then reconstructed – communities fell apart, the irrigation closed, farming practices changed, wildlife disappeared' (Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery Exhibition Catalogue 2012, p. 38), a scenario redolent of solastalgia. Mincham's art process begins by drawing on an initial idea, which he translates into symbols and from there, 'symbols begin to become an orderly structure that develops a form, that makes a statement' (McKenzie 2011). The work *Full Moon – Dry Lake (No end in sight – ruin: January 2009)* depicts a drought-afflicted, desolate landscape and the caption 'no end in sight' accurately voices the emotions felt in a multitude of communities reliant on agriculture to survive and dependent on rain which may or may not arrive. The *Life in Your Hands* exhibition works, of which Mincham's are but one example, enact sensemaking as discussed earlier in the paper. They share the intent of my works in that they elucidate the problems which engender solastalgia or ecological grief and through exposing the viewer to aesthetic, symbolic representations, evoke emotion—a precursor to understanding

or making sense of feelings about their changed world and finding a mode of adaptation applicable to their own narrative.

When Indigenous Australians speak of 'country' it means more than simply the land—it encompasses the environment, the human and non-human: 'the mind, body, spirit and land are seen as intimately interconnected' (Green, Jackson & Morrison 2009, p. 43). As CSIRO researcher Green states:

> Many Indigenous people living in remote areas have a heightened sensitivity to ecosystem change due to the close connections that exist for them between the health of their 'country', their physical and mental well-being and the maintenance of their cultural practices. A biophysical change manifested in a changing ecosystem has, for example, the potential to affect their mental health in a way not usually considered in non-Indigenous societies. (Green 2006, p. 1)

It is interesting to note that while Green suggested in 2006 that there was understanding of Indigenous Australians' connection to country and of a consequent emotional impact, less attention was directed towards psychological effects impacting non-Indigenous people. Over a decade later I have uncovered a comparatively small but growing body of research on this subject. Much of the discussion pertaining to this topic centres on agricultural connections to the land, the plight of farming communities stricken by drought. The correlation between environmental damage and change and negative psychological well-being as impacting Indigenous peoples has been readily understood due to the established holistic nature of their relationship to the land. This project seeks to contribute to discourse in visual form, from a non-Indigenous perspective and from the position of individuals who are not directly reliant on the land for their day-to-day subsistence yet are feeling a somewhat inexplicable sense of loss, despair and disconnection.

Chapter 4
There is no safety in nature—it is unpredictable, erratic, moving spasmodically and blind.

– Erik Swyngedouw (2015, p. 135)

Albrecht's statement, which I quote, that 'something is wrong with the human–nature relationship' (Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery Exhibition Catalogue 2012, p. 8) articulates key themes of the project, a destabilisation of the historical divide between nature and culture and an awareness of nature's sublime power, a return to an entangled human/non-human relationship, the resulting awareness that the environment's future is interwoven with humanity's future and the psychological effects of this new knowledge on the individual. An early impetus for my project was a desire to interrogate this changed and devolving relationship occurring as a result of Anthropogenic change, however while it is a compelling and relevant factor it is not the focus of the project and I have therefore had to limit the discussion. I would qualify Albrecht's statement by suggesting that this 'wrongness' takes the form of a reluctant re-enmeshing of humankind and nature which has begun to replace a former sense of control of human over the planet's resources and compounded by the already stated issues of culpability and futility. Within this fraught interrelationship there exists a realisation that the non-human cannot be disregarded and used without consequence. As part of this project, I depict climate change induced extreme weather events as metaphors for nature's backlash against its long-accepted relegation to a subservient role by capitalist societies and as expressions of human psychological turmoil as experienced by those individuals for whom ecological grief, in any form, is a reality. In early investigations, sculptures and surrealist-influenced paintings spoke of the intertwined state of human and non-human.

Entangled
In his 2017 book *Defiant earth*, Hamilton posits such an entanglement, a merging of humanity and the planet's 'geological evolution' (Hamilton 2017, p.129).
He claims:

> From here on, our history will increasingly be dominated by ‘natural’ processes influenced by humans, injected with agency but increasingly beyond our control because the earth is becoming less controllable in the Anthropocene. (Hamilton 2017, p. 129)

The entangled human–nature position asserted by this project is expressed primarily through the sculptural pieces. The sculptures fuse man-made (found objects) and natural (plant matter) as symbols of humanity and nature. The merging of these materials within the sculptures speaks of human loss of control in the present era/future eras. In her 1989–90 work *Paradisus Terrestris entitled,* Fiona Hall created art objects from sardine tins which she transfigured from everyday consumer product discard into detailed and beautiful sculptural forms which speak of a ‘collision between Culture and Nature’ (Smith 1997)

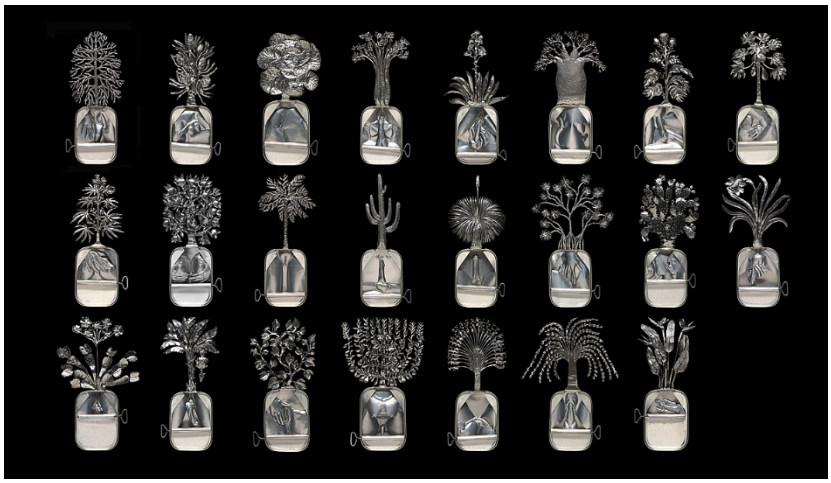

Figure 16: Fiona Hall, *Paradisus Terrestris entitled,*1989–90*,* 23 cut and moulded sardine tins; aluminium, tin and steel, each approx. 24.5 h x 11.0 w x 1.5 d cm, National Gallery of Australia collection, © Fiona Hall

My early sculptural works (2017) utilised found objects which held connotations of a privileged humanity: finely shaped, elegant and ornate pieces, columns and pedestals coalesced with natural materials—sticks, foliage, and stones—in order to represent a lessening culture-nature divide.

Figure 17: Catherine Phillips, *Slow Violence series*, (installation view, solo exhibition Sawtooth ARI) 2017, found objects and materials, enamel and resin, 37cm x 7cm

Further materials experimentation produced an expanded dialogue and the creation of sculptural forms which articulated the project's ideas in a more explicit manner. The incorporation of living plants which continued to grow—despite coatings of enamel, plaster and resin—for a prolonged period before succumbing to neglect, were designed to demonstrate a determination of nature to prevail. The inclusion of broken glass, knives and sharp metal as part of the structure of the sculptures aimed to signify an aggressive strength and fortitude of nature with the potential to survive, as humanity likely flounders and fails. These later sculptures are formed as an assemblage of objects and materials, human-made and natural and sited to suggest an uncontrolled event has gathered them and led to their final, random placement in the landscape. They reflect both a sense of nature fighting back and an assemblage of actors functioning together; yet competing within the one work, an enmeshing of counter-positioned materials which exhibit some form of unsettled rapport. The sculptures represent an accumulation of remnants of the living and non-living, joined in the aftermath of a series of apocalyptic events. A number of the works have additionally been embellished with small, clay growth-like biomorphic forms—speculative artificial nature. The sculptures' structure aims to express that the consequences of negative impact on the planet refuse to distinguish between human/nature/thing—with a propensity to adapt being the deciding factor in survival. This second iteration of the sculptural works is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

The project amalgamates two meanings of the term assemblage: the creative combining of a range of disparate objects and the Jane Bennett definition as documented in her seminal text *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things* (2010) (an interpretation garnered from the writings of La Tour, Deleuze and Guattari), that of a random grouping of matter: actants human and non-human. An actant is 'a source of action that can be either human or non-human; it is that which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference, produce effects, alter the course of events (Bennett 2010, p. viii) while an assemblage of such actants can facilitate agency or power. This position is relevant to the project's concerns regarding the human-nature relationship as it reinforces a connectedness which has long been denied through elements of the human species' actions of control over the planet. The sculptures also serve as a visual expression of Bennett's theory in that they are assemblages of actants designed to 'produce effects', in this case to evoke an affective response in the viewer which may lead to new understandings. These ideas are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Process as Metaphor

Many of German-born artist Anselm Kiefer's works are representative of Bennett's views and this project's position on agency and control, process and materiality as expressed through the artefacts. They demonstrate his belief in the power of materials to symbolise ideas and states of being. He says:

> For me ideas aren't up in the sky and materials down in the earth … materials have a spirit that is evoked by the physical presence, which can be accessed and opened up. In the Romantic tradition everything is connected in a kind of universal underground. (Hudson 2014)

Kiefer utilises materials capable of transcending their original states either through the artist's deliberate intent or through chance, unexpected combinations or the nature of the matter itself in assemblage with the artist and various forces.

> His paintings often contain materials that are bound to mutate: straw, lead that once flowed like a sluggish liquid. Some of his recent works were given a final touch by electrolysis – they were placed in a chemical bath with a cathode

> and an anode so that copper was deposited on its lead, which in turn became part of the surface of the painting. The copper turned green, but – and this was the point that delighted Kiefer – alterations carried on occurring. People who bought these works, he told me with glee, would have to be told that in six months they would have a different picture. (Gayford 2014)

I work in a similar manner, with my process relying on the actions of materials, whether planned or largely unknown, with effects specifically sought after or intentionally uncontrolled, metaphorically expressing the project's ideas and themes. In Kiefer's painting *Aschenblume (Ash Flower),* the surface has been sprinkled with ash, which arts writer Jonathon Jones describes as a 'spattering of death dust' (Jones 2014) symbolic of Hitler's gas chamber atrocities. Kiefer's materials are chosen on the basis of 'the emotions that they stir in him' (Bartolozzi, Picollo, Marchiafava, Centeno, Duvernois, Di Girolamo, Modugno, La Nasa, Colombini & Rava 2015, p.564) Bartolozzi et al. highlight Kiefer's quote from the book *Merkaba*:

> I only use materials that speak to me. I don't believe that the Idea can be found everywhere – the Idea in the sense of spirit is already present in the material. For example, lead: it's the material of melancholy, of black rancor.(Bartolozzi et al. 2015,p. 564)

Figure 18: Anselm Kiefer, *Aschenblume*, 1983–97, oil, emulsion, acrylic paint, clay, ash, earth, and dried sunflower on canvas, 378.46 cm x 760.095 cm, acquired in 2002, Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Gift of the Burnett Foundation in honour of Michael Auping.

In my project, early articulations of the theme of entanglement were expressed through oil paintings which drew on sculptural imagery and personal speculative

imaginings to represent a dream-like surrealist landscape in which symbols of human, nature and object are merged. As demonstrated in the surrealism-influenced work *Entangled*, in part depicted below, the mouth serves as a figurative expression of the human, with the object (tap) and nature (flower, vines) placed on the same level or higher in the landscape in order to emphasise a non-hierarchical positioning of human over non-human.

Figure 19: Catherine Phillips, *Entangled,* 2018, oil on canvas, 90cm x 75cm

The limited palette of this and later paintings suggests a speculative, darkened, post-apocalyptic landscape and draws on the emotive power of colour, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. The surrealist imagery of the above work additionally expresses entanglement through the depiction of incongruous symbols of human/nature/thing unified through vine/rope as a metaphorical linkage. I came to consider this style of painting as too literal an approach and as limiting the full expression of the project's ideas regarding emotional response. I began experimenting with a less figurative technique, progressing to landscape-oriented works. In a number of these works, a horizon line has been utilised as a device to suggest to the viewer that a given work is a landscape painting, that it is speaking about the land, the earth, the planet, however what is taking place within the manufactured landscape is abstract, random, uncategorised. In some works, this initially defined border has been swamped by the flow of materials, speaking of both physical world impacts of sea level rise and extreme weather events and an overpowering affective response experienced by the individual. Again, process functions as a metaphor, through the use of largely uncontrolled applications of material combinations to portray uncontrolled phenomena.

Loss of control is analogous to the agential elements of the painting process, to climate change generally and to the emotional responses engendered by both of them. British writer and artist Julian Bell's description of a painting method he utilised and the understandings he gathered from this process speak of such material agency. As he describes:

> I took the white-primed canvas – this was my first act in marking it – leant it at an angle, and poured down, from what would become its base, a loose turpentine solution of a very strong yellow, letting the liquid stain and sediment however it chanced to run. (Bell 2013)

Bell suggests that by 'inviting a relatively random process into the making of the image' it engendered a sense of otherness and the unexplained in his painting (Bell 2013). He says the sensation was one of 'reaching out to touch something other in my studio – something not entirely self-willed and human' and compares this to confronting an erupting volcano, 'something powerfully other', the lived experience which inspired the work (Bell 2013). According to Bell, methods whereby the artist deliberately relinquishes control of the art-making process have been utilised to express the sublime, powerful and unknowable forces of nature over time. He cites examples such as Joseph Wright who felt that the brush was inadequate to 'conjure up the primal force of the geological phenomenon he had observed' and instead opted for the lesser control of using its handle (Bell 2013)

Sublime

The change in painting approach which sought to more effectively generate art artefacts conveying emotion led, as stated, to the creation of paintings depicting extreme weather events. The works portray scenes of current and future dystopian landscapes and aim to signify psychological turmoil in addition to speaking of a form of retaliation by a forceful nature. Serres suggests that 'those who share power today have forgotten nature, which could be said to be taking its revenge but which, more to the point, is reminding us of its existence' (Serres 1995, p. 29) The intent of the work's imagery and processes is to highlight both nature's sublime power and metaphorically humanity's inner disorder. Through these works, links to the

apocalyptic sublime were formed. White and Pajaczkowska suggest in *The sublime now* that:

It occurred to us that the sublime as an aesthetic of terrible and destructive nature seems to have powerful resonances – though perhaps problematic ones – with the ecological awareness which has emerged in the wake of increasing fears about environmental destruction at the start of the new century. (White & Pajaczkowska, 2009 p. xv) The project aimed to visually explore these 'powerful resonances' and connections between 18th century ideas of the sublime and contemporary experiences of climate change and the ability of natural forces to evoke overwhelming emotion.

Figure 20: Catherine Phillips, *Precarity series*, 2018, oil, enamel and ink on canvas, 70cm x 80cm

Immanuel Kant, a pre-eminent exponent of the sublime, defined it as an experience rather than an object. As Forsey explains, for Kant the sublime is 'not something in the world – some portion of the "real" that we directly experience – but a feeling we have that is occasioned by certain sensory experiences' (Forsey 2007, p. 384). The somewhat indefinable experience of the sublime is one that has drawn the attention of philosophers and theorists over centuries. Modern-day definitions of the term sublime as 'extremely good, beautiful or enjoyable' (Cambridge Dictionary) present difficulties for artists endeavouring to transmit a sense of the overwhelming in the face of an unimaginable concept, a 'hyperobject' as posited by Morton in his book *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and ecology after the end of the world* (Morton 2013, p. 1). According to Morton, climate change is such an object (although he prefers the

description ‘global warming’, viewing the term climate change as a watered-down version of the gravity of the situation (Morton 2013, p. 14). Monk also recognised the ambiguity of the term sublime, claiming that ‘no single definition of the term would serve in any single decade’ but that ‘the word naturally expressed high admiration and usually implied a strong emotional effect, which, in the latter years of the century, frequently turned on terror’ (Monk 1935, p. 233). As described by Monk, the poet Wordsworth spoke of his experiences of a childhood in the mountainous Lake District region of Britain as growing up ‘foster’d alike by beauty and by fear’ where his early experiences of nature’s awe-inspiring beauty and scale was the impetus for his writings and instilled in him an awareness of its power. (Monk 1935, p. 230). Burke’s 1757 analysis, *A philosophical inquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful,* sets out an interpretation of the sublime which has informed this project. Burke’s text draws a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime and describes the sublime as ‘the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling’ (Burke 1757, p.45) and claims that ‘whatever is in any sort terrible or is conversant about terrible objects or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*’ (Burke 1757, p.45). I suggest through this project that Anthropogenic climate change is Burke’s ‘terror’ of this age, as Hulme states:

> We are living in a climate of fear about our future climate. The language of the public discourse around global warming routinely uses a repertoire which includes words such as ‘catastrophe’, ‘terror’, ‘danger’, ‘extinction’ and ‘collapse’. (Hulme 2008, p.5)

Additionally, Forsey observes that the sublime, ‘a notion that conjures up the inexplicable, the overwhelming and the horrendous may be well suited to the current age’ (Forsey 2007, p. 381).

Historical representations of nature have informed this aspect of the project’s creative output, and in particular the body of work portraying extreme weather events, which has been greatly inspired by the concept of the sublime. While researching this project I came across the writings of Elizabeth Carter (a member of the Blue Stocking Literary Society) of which the following letter, written in 1809, is an example. It describes a powerful nature, sublime when viewed from afar, where

threat can evoke emotions of awe, while the terror aspect is tempered by distance. I suggest that elements of society living in as yet unaffected zones view climate change and other Anthropogenic effects through this lens. Safe within their homes, tornadoes, floods and extreme weather events are watched with a fascination and awe, minus the terror induced by impending catastrophe directly affecting them. As a result, much of my early research considered how human experience of extreme weather events in the Anthropocene era could be viewed as a contemporary experience of the apocalyptic sublime. The focus of the project shifted as the creative work progressed and months passed, however the impressions Carter's poetic words evoked in my mind contributed to interest in what became a key theme—the power of imagery to provoke emotional response. The passage of writing below subsequently inspired several of my works:

> We returned home beneath a sky the most awfully sublime that can be imagined. The deep gloom of the clouds was rendered the more dismal by a mixture of sullen light. The rapid whirlwind, the rolling thunder, the rattling hail, and all the dreadful enginery of heaven, seemed collecting its forces, to burst in some tremendous explosion over our heads. Miss Sharpe for all her passion for the sublime, which is very strong, was so overpowered by the terrifying scenery, that she could not bear to look at it. I could not resist such a spectacle; but I was heartily glad and thankful when the solemn apparatus ended on nothing worse than a hollow chilling wind and a heavy shower (Carter 1809, p. 223)

Carter, while drawn to the awe-inspiring tableau, felt a sense of relief as an impending ferocious storm reduced to little more than a 'heavy shower'.
Such a duality of emotional response is, according to Tom Cochrane, 'one of the most widely noted features of the sublime experience' (Cochrane 2012, p.126).
This sensation of attraction and repulsion is also reflected in fluid processes adopted in the creation of the project's studio works and the subsequent merge/repel of contraindicated materials and objects.

In this project I have created paintings depicting extreme weather events, specifically hurricanes, violent storms and floods, as emblematic of climate change. I have

created sculptural forms which aim to suggest an aftermath representative of any number of potentially destructive cataclysmic events. I have suggested a correlation between tumultuous events and the emotional turmoil of the individual experience—a form of entanglement of human and nature. This merged relationship is also reflected in the sculptural forms which combine human-made and natural materials and incorporate clay biomorphic details. Anthropogenic climate change substantially contributes to extreme weather events; I suggest that such phenomena can be viewed as a contemporary experience of the Romantic era idea of the sublime. I suggest that the sublime is pertinent in any discussion of the power of the art artefact to generate emotion. In this paper, as previously indicated, I categorise the sublime as did Burke, as evocative of a sense of awe and potentially terror and claim that experiences of extreme weather events in the Anthropocene era can be viewed through this lens. My paintings draw on the sublime imagery of current weather events as portrayed in the media; the sculptures originate from speculative imaginings of a dystopian future, proposing narratives of threat. Combined in installation form, the work seeks to explore an environment of uncertainty, to make climate change affect visible and contribute to voicing psychological response to the disruptions of the Anthropocene era. The works utilise process as metaphor to aid this discourse primarily through an emphasis on material control and agency; this is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Move me, astonish me, unnerve me, make me tremble, weep, shudder, rage, then delight my eyes afterwards, if you care to.

– Denis Diderot

In this chapter I discuss artworks and related studio methodology in order to connect themes and artefacts. I also define affect as it has been applied in this project and elaborate on how artworks can produce affective response in the viewer. In analysing selected artworks, I consider the works through formal elements and elaborate on my usage of process as metaphor. When discussing metaphor, I operate under Griffiths and Costi's definition of 'the concept of understanding one thing in terms of another' (Griffiths & Costi 2011, p. 179). Within the artworks I utilise the processes of control, fusion, entanglement, toxicity, inundation, rupture, and repair to represent in physical form ideas of forces and impacts on the planet and correspondingly on its inhabitants.

Affective Response and Colour

When addressing the concept of affect in their writings, philosophers such as Bergson, Spinoza, and Deleuze and Guattari refer to embodied experience. Salter describes affect as "the manner in which 'prepersonal' forces, whether physical – material, like the weather, or psycho-emotional, like language or passions) modify, operate on, and transform bodies" (Salter 2015, p. 247) Hickey-Moody describes affect as "the concept of taking something on, of changing in relation to an experience or encounter" (Hickey-Moody 2016, p. 259)

Within the field of psychology, my understanding of the term and one which I adopt in this paper is that it relates to an outward expression of emotion. For the purposes of this research I include aspects of both meanings of the word in considering affect in relation to art objects. Human interactions with art artefacts can prompt a multitude of responses, influenced by prior experiences and personal associations, including how relevant they feel the content is to themselves (Pelowski, Markey, Forster, Gerger & Leder 2017). As the viewer extends their thoughts beyond an initial basic

assessment of an artwork and involves higher-order thinking, Pelowski et al. suggest that they ‘discover complex meanings, novelty, and make judgments’ whereby ‘art may spur us to create new meanings, new classifications, or perceptions’ (Pelowski et al. 2017, p. 84) This project aims to prompt this visual engagement through an installation utilising colour, imagery and process to evoke ideas of climate change impacts. This approach addresses, through the art object, a growing need and desire for individuals to make sense of a confusing, concerning and rapidly changing world. The previously stated intent of this project is that it not be didactic or activist but instead that it allows the viewer to draw their own meaning from immersing themselves in the work, critically evaluating their emotion, experiencing resonances and developing understanding from the experience. Hickey-Moody suggests there is a “pedagogical shift in perception effected by the aesthetics of an artwork” (Hickey-Moody 2016, p. 258) and as Pelowski et al. state, ‘art can also create longitudinal impacts. These include self-adjustments, changes in one's personality/worldview’ (Pelowski et al. 2017, p. 84). Van de Cruys, Chamberlain and Wagemans (2017) state that artworks can provide a form of consolation or comfort to the individual in validating their emotions through an awareness of the shared nature of their experiences. They suggest that:

> Even if no concrete solutions for sorrows are offered in the artwork, the mere discovery of similar affective dynamics validates the existence of the perceivers and the cognitive/affective schemata with which they experience (and navigate through) the world. (Van de Cruys et al. 2017, p. 1)

In Chapter 3 I suggested that the art artefact has the power to present the viewer with metaphorical representations of an issue or experience and evoke affect. The artist’s representation of an idea is not necessarily explicit, which enables the viewer to take from the work what they will and utilise it to validate or inform their own understanding. As Van de Cruys et al. explain, art ‘finds resonance in the affective models of perceivers’ and ‘has the potential to resolve inner conflicts or ambiguities through attunement, by confirming models that allow seemingly contradicting states to coexist or by validating one model over the other’ (Van de Cruys et al. 2017, p.1).

The paintings selected for installation form a series entitled *Uncharted Territory* which speaks of an unknown future for human and planet. The works depict a series of disturbed landscapes and express an uncontrolled, violent and tumultuous world reflecting humanity's inability to prevent its own destruction. All the project's 2D works share a common restricted colour palette of primarily blue and blue violet tones. Blue was chosen as the colour most conducive to expressing and engendering the psychological responses to climate change which have driven this project, on the basis of various studies into the effects of colour on human behaviour and the emotions. The field of environmental psychology analyses the interaction between individuals and their surroundings—one element of this relationship is the influence of colour. Colour can 'affect the physiological response such as heartrate as well as anxiety and human comfort' (Savavibool, Gatersleben & Moorapun 2016, p. 262) and 'influence mood and performance' (Stone & English 1998, p. 175). In their study on the effects of colour on work environments, Stone and English found that 'greater depression scores occurred for those who worked in the blue office' (Stone & English 1998, p. 175). Another test by the same researchers measured whether children's strength was affected by the colour of the room in which they were placed, finding that strength was 'lower when they were in the blue room' and in addition they were more likely to create 'negative paintings in the blue room' (Stone & English 1998, p. 176). Researcher Bernard Levy had his subjects complete a mood-state questionnaire after they had been exposed to a range of colours, finding that 'the blue-violet color was equated with sadness and fatigue' (Levy 1984, p.58). The relationship between colour and emotion is relevant but many faceted and this project's focus does not extend to a more in-depth analysis, however I will conclude this aspect of the discussion by stating that while any emotional reaction is at the whim of personal subjectivity, based on relevant studies there can be a reasonable expectation that certain colours will be viewed and responded to in a given way as 'when the study of color harmony is combined with the science of psychology, reactions can be predicted with startling accuracy' (Gronholm 2010, p.1).

Figure 21: Catherine Phillips, *Uncharted Territory* series, (detail) 2018, studio process view.

New Materialism

Much of the painting process relies upon the agency of materials, serving as a metaphor for environmental states of flow, attraction and repulsion, and leading to the creation of abstract imagery. The process of creating the paintings presented as part of this thesis is an extension of methods utilised in my Honours year which considered the relationship of the artist, materials, chemical reactions and forces such as gravity working as a collaborative assemblage. This mode of creation was heavily influenced by the new materialist ideas of Jane Bennett's vibrant matter theory introduced in Chapter 4 and to some extent Karen Barad's agential realism. The importance of a cross disciplinary approach in addressing the issue of climate change is widely accepted and stated in this paper, with artists uniquely equipped to stimulate and shape thought and to challenge and engage audiences.
As Salter explains:

> "artists and researcher-creators organize the conditions for experimental, performative assemblages to form and catalyze other ways of knowing and being in the world – assemblages that side step the tired dichotomies between subjects and objects, human and non-human, mind and body and knowing and experiencing." (Salter 2015, p.xi)

The paintings presented for assessment were created though pouring paint, ink, acrylic and enamel on canvas. The absolute control of the artist at this stage was lessened and the initial forms originated through the work of manipulated gravity and

a corresponding flow of merged and stemmed materials, a mimesis of water surge, floodwaters rising and settling. Canvases were raised at certain points to ensure that materials rose and fell and were permitted to control the imagery on the canvas. Marks made on the canvas became tide-lines as pools of materials dried in the places to which they had flowed. My participation in the process at this point was to intuitively identify and heighten 'important' marks created by the materials and gravity through painted interventions while allowing other forms to remain in their natural state. As Kontturi states, "an artist is neither the master of the art process, nor an autonomous actor, rather she is a member of a creative rhizome, a co-worker) (Kontturi 2014, p.48) Salter explains that artists are "no longer in control" and resemble "explorers of what the world has to offer, creating openings for undersigned effects and affects to appear" (Salter 2015, p.244)

Bennett's theory (which imbues all matter with a force capable of causing effects) and new materialism generally, reinforces the project's assertions as to an entangled human/nature/object. This entanglement - in light of Anthropogenic climate change - can contribute to experiences of ecological grief as our "shared, vital materiality" (Bennett year, p.14) serves to heighten awareness of the damage inflicted upon the planet and our experiences of place. As Bennett claims:

> Each human is a heterogeneous compound of wonderfully vibrant, dangerously vibrant, matter. If matter itself is lively, then not only is the difference between subjects and object minimized, but the status of the shared materiality of all things is elevated" (Bennett, 2009, pp. 12-13).

Barad's concept of agential realism reinforces the themes and processes of this project in that it claims that "all matter is equal, but that this matter has agency and only comes into being through the act of intermingling with other particles of matter." (Yerbury, 2017, p.4) This theory is embodied in the idea of a lack of separation between human and nature as asserted in this project and in the methods of creating its art artefacts. As previously discussed, early painting experimentation tested the idea of utilizing text to transmit the projects key themes, however I came to view this method as limiting an exploration of the idea of affect as it related to climate change induced ecological grief. Barad questions why language and culture have long been

considered to possess agency whereas “matter is figured as passive and immutable” (Barad 2003, p.801 She suggests that matter be “given its due as an active participant in the world’s becoming, in its ongoing intra-activity” (Barad 2003, p.803) In this project human thought and action join with matter, which is recognised as a participant in the creative process – paint dictates the form of painting imagery, and plaster and resin direct the nuances of the sculptural shapes. Barad devised the term ‘material-discursive’ to describe her position that discourse can be achieved through material engagement.” (Yerbury 2017, p.10) She explains that humans do not just “assemble” materials but also form part of the assemblage, they are “themselves specific local parts of the world’s ongoing reconfiguring.” (Barad 2003, p.829) The creative elements of the project are fueled by my processual interpretations of new materialist ideas and personal reflection on climate change and its ramifications, merging with physical actions, materials and forces to produce artefacts which as Barad claims ‘come into being’ through this ‘intra-activity’. Salter describes this process as human and material “co-produced in the act of making” (Salter 2015, p.xi) and Yerbury suggests that the “materials enact upon the artist” as much as the artist who “moves them, shapes them, generates new forms and ideas with them” acts on the materials. (Yerbury 2017, p.11) I suggest there is evidence of this in the making processes utilized in this project in that the forms created through the agency of materials provide the direction for further interventions by the artist. Yerbury states that if we accept the agency of matter then it can be claimed that ‘it is possible that the act of making art and *subsequent interaction with it* (my emphasis) also embodies these agential capacities.” (Yerbury 2017, p.8) This notion supports my assertions regarding the ability of the art artefact to evoke affect.

Artworks and Artist References

I felt it important that the viewer understand that the paintings were speaking of landscape, therefore a horizon line was incorporated into each of the larger works as a device to suggest terrain. The horizon line has been placed at varying levels in the frame of the work, depending upon the focus of the weather event depiction, i.e. whether the action is taking place in the sky or sea, directing the eye-level of the viewer and focusing their attention on the contextual information foregrounded in the work. As previously stated, in some works this defined separation between land and water or sky has been intentionally partially obscured by materials and processes

replicating inundation, rising water levels and storms. Each painting depicts turmoil in the form of representations of actual and speculative extreme weather events rather than purely non-objective imagery and correlates with and references human emotion. Water in various forms has been a key motif within these works, referencing sea level rise, rain storm, tumultuous hurricane/tornado-hit waters and melting ice, all issues at the forefront of climate change concerns during this project. The sculptural components of the project's installation are unified through the use of black which has been selected due to its association with menace and threat. It is literally 'an absence of light' (Gronholm 2010, p.5) and as such has been linked in this project to the idea of a post-apocalyptic world, a world of darkness, drawing on the idea of human fears of the dark to evoke an emotional response. The sculptures also aim to reflect emotions of anxiety and fear through the suggestion of an aftermath, a dystopian future, an apocalypse, with each sculpture a metaphorical small cataclysm contributing to a whole of devastation.

The artworks and critical frameworks of a number of artists have influenced and supported the methods and themes adopted within this project including those of Iraqi-born artist Abbas Akhavan whose works share similar concerns and aesthetic to those of this project. The influence of war, which as Paley suggests has historically served as a powerful stimulus for creative works exploring the apocalyptic sublime (Paley 1986, p. 183), underlies his practice which speaks of forms of violence against the planet. In his ongoing installation *Study for a Monument* which began in 2013, Akhavan has replicated in bronze (albeit at a substantially larger scale) extinct plant species from the site of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the region known as the Fertile Crescent, where early civilisation is thought to have begun. This work and its presentation on white death-shroud-like sheets speaks to multiple issues: the work can be seen as a reflection on the effects of the war in Iraq as well as the environmental damage inflicted on the area's ecosystem through drainage of the marshes and damming of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Seven suggests that remnants of the casting process 'give these plants a post-apocalyptic feeling and the look of petrified fossils at the same time' and 'convey a sense of loss crawling back from past times and a form of evidence for an ongoing catastrophe' (Seven 2016).

Figure 22: Abbas Akhavan, *Study for a Monument* (2013–present), cast bronze, cotton fabric, dimensions variable. Installation view, Mercer Union, 2015. Photo by Toni Hafkenscheid. Courtesy of the artist, Villa Stuck and The Third Line.

Akhavan's reflection on the past shaping the present also resonates with this project in his acknowledgement of negative actions of past generations of humanity on the planet. His works also highlight the ongoing confliction between society's attitudes towards environmental use and stewardship. Seven (2016) describes Akhavan's expression of this oppositional stance:

> The plant species in this work are monumentalized and broken down at the same time, reminiscent of two seemingly opposing conceptions of nature that coexist in contemporary discourses; its exploitation as a resource and its reification as a space to be preserved. (Seven 2016)

My sculptures, as explained in Chapter 4, in some ways also convey a duality - in their representation of destruction and resilience, in the merging of human-made and natural materials and as metaphors for both physical planetary and human psychological damage. New Zealand sculptor and painter Zina Swanson also uses artificial and natural materials to create structures and installations which speak of the way in which humans objectify nature. As suggested by the title, Swanson's 2010 work *Symptoms of Incompatibility* is an installation of incongruous pairings of plants with objects holding medical connotations (bandages, clamps). These objects are designed to sustain life but are failing due to the 'incompatible properties' of plant and object (Lister 2010, p. 1). As Lister states:

> The nature she entraps is positioned between life and death and denied the mythologies of romanticism. The evident failure of the device and faux surgery

recognises the fiction of implicit salvation and any joining of nature and humanity, rejecting any catharsis or redemption. (Lister 2010, p.1)

Figure 23: Zina Swanson, *Symptoms of Incompatibility*, 2010, courtesy of the artist and SOFA Gallery, photo by Tim Veling.

While Swanson's installation is suggestive of an entrenched nature–culture divide, my work claims (as stated in Chapter 4, and supported by Hamilton's views expressed in his book *Defiant earth*) that in this current era of the Anthropocene, humanity and the 'geological evolution' of the planet are increasingly linked. As I have described, this entanglement is visually and theoretically expressed through the sculptural forms and paintings which oppose through the method of their creation, what Lister describes as the 'fiction' of such a 'joining of nature and humanity' (Lister 2010, p.1).

I have found former New Zealand artist Hayden Fowler's themes to be particularly relevant references, not only as they speak of a dystopian future stemming from environmental destruction but also as they address emotional impact. Fowler constructs speculative installations which resemble stage sets in which he performs, directs and documents his ideas. His gallery biography describes as a key theme of his practice the 'the global human-nature crisis, widely acknowledged to be at a point of no return' and 'the effect of lost natures on the human psyche' (Artereal 2018). Fowler said of his 2015–16 work *Dark Ecology* (installed at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Korea and outside the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney) that it was about 'creating a space to think about perceptions and our emotional experiences of the environment and the contemporary age, the Anthropocene' (Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) 2018).

Figure 24: Hayden Fowler*, Dark Ecology* (installation view), 2015*,* MMCA Korea. Mixed media, CCTV cameras, 8-channel video, monitor. Image courtesy and © the artist.

In a video on the Museum of Contemporary Art website, Fowler suggests society is 'bombarded with imagery and knowledge of the amount of destruction that is going on in our environment and the climate"' but despite this level of awareness these ideas are 'understood and spoken about really tentatively' and that 'we don't have language to think about or speak about these ideas particularly on an emotional level' (MCA 2018). Through the work *Dark Ecology,* Fowler expresses a perceived need in this era for methods of making sense of a changing environment, planet and future; concerns shared by this project as explained in Chapter 2. Fowler explains that the work is 'about creating a space where the audience can be immersed in their ideas and think about or react to these ideas or this kind of imagery' which he describes as an 'emerging aesthetics of death in the landscape' (MCA 2018). Fowler's comments regarding 'creating a space' resonate with this project's aim to produce an immersive installation which engenders affect in order to facilitate some form of personal adaptation in the individual experiencing negative psychological response to the impending catastrophes of Anthropogenic climate change. His 'emerging aesthetics of death' bears a similarity to the views of Scranton who has suggested that humanity needs to 'learn to die' in the Anthropocene. (Scranton 2015, p. 21). Fowler's *Dark Ecology* seeks to confront the viewer with a 'destroyed … depleted landscape in order to transmit ideas of the changed relationship between humans and the natural world and humanity's ill-considered treatment of the planet as resource (MCA 2018).

My project also aims to reflect this change through artist/material 'intra-activity' and agency. Each sculpture has been individually created from discarded found objects and urban and roadside plant matter, creating an assemblage of fusion—human-made and natural.

Figure 25: Catherine Phillips, *Cataclysm series*, 2018, found objects, enamel, plaster and resin, 38cm x 48cm x 37cm

These works have undergone a liberal coating of enamel paint, plaster and resin and have been installed with a surround of black sand granules—materials designed to reflect human usage of the planet as a resource (oil, coal) and consequences for the landscape/environment (toxicity). The shine produced by the resin over the black enamel suggests the slickness of oil. Sharp objects embedded in some of the sculptural forms are, as stated previously, suggestive of a resilient nature and also serve as signifiers of threat and damage to the planet. The method utilised to coat the found objects demonstrates the agential aspect of process in that the materials flow over the form and gravitate to protrusions or crevices 'at will', suggestive of flood water or sea level rise—an example of process as metaphor. The irregularity of the resulting forms suggests unpredictability, an inability to control an unknowable object. The sculptures are grouped yet separated, an uneasy union forged through a mutual fate. There is weight in numbers—this death is no isolated incident confined to one species while another is left unscathed. Harm inflicted by climate change is neither discerning nor selective in that all living things will be affected, albeit at varying levels, a view made visible through the merging of natural and human-made materials as representative of human and non-human. The placement of the sculptures on the floor situates the viewer in the landscape. My original intent was to include surrounding and supporting black granules, which are prone to spread beyond their ill-defined boundaries and track those who encroach to serve to

implicate any who walk within the installation space, suggesting ideas of culpability, however a decision was made to remove these and heighten the effect of the shadows cast by the objects.

Conclusion

Multiple theorists including Bostic and Howey (2017), Hulme (2011) and Masco (2015) suggest that the disciplines predominantly tasked with voicing climate change, namely the sciences, are struggling to express the severity and magnitude of the problem in a meaningful and believable way; a way which resonates with the individual and facilitates understanding and adaptation. This is largely due to the fact that science is traditionally reliant on data and facts whereas ramifications of the new problem of climate change are speculative, constantly changing and therefore open to refutation and counter claims which further cloud the issue. For these reasons I felt it necessary to devote a substantial component of this paper to elucidating the fact that not only is climate change 'real', it is an existential risk and therefore individuals can be severely emotionally impacted by this truth. As the aforementioned theorists acknowledge, there has been a turn to the creative arts in search of new forms of response to the risks of climate change and their impacts on humanity and the planet. These risks have been in a sense downplayed due to a propensity for scientists to err on the side of conservatism and exhibit a 'scholarly reticence' (Spratt & Dunlop 2018, p. 40) which has hampered the acceptance of facts and subsequently divided communities.

Aspects of creative arts process are synonymous with uncertainty and fluidity of fact—artists frequently embrace the unplanned and unexpected outcome, making them ideal cultural practitioners to decipher and express the difficult concept of Anthropogenic climate change in alternative ways. Through the power the art artefact holds to cause affect, Hickey-Moody states that "artworks create a new sensory landscape for their beholder" (Hickey-Moody 2016, p. 260) Hollo and Rimmer suggest artists 'help shape our understanding of the world, framing ideas, prefiguring change, and opening hearts and minds to new ways of thinking' (Hollo & Rimmer 2014, p. 2).

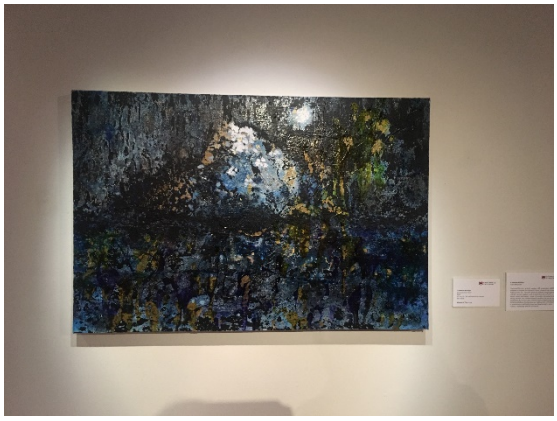

Figure 26: Catherine Phillips, Uncharted Territory series, (installation view, Academy Gallery), 2018, oil, acrylic, ink and enamel on canvas, 60cm x 90cm.

The terrifying unknowability of the future, a lack of concrete solutions and shifting data have led to climate change impacting not only materially but psychologically on the individual. Indigenous peoples' connectedness to country has been much espoused—as Aboriginal activist Catherine Liddle states, 'to not know your country causes a painful disconnection, the impact of which is well documented in studies relating to health, wellbeing and life outcomes' (Common Ground 2018). In the era of the Anthropocene, the reach of this disconnection as a result of climate change is broadening and, as discussed, embodied by relatively new terms such as Albrecht's solastalgia and Ellis and Cunsolo's ecological grief. This emotional experience has been described as 'disenfranchised' grief, a form of grief which is 'not openly accepted or acknowledged in society' (Kevorkian 2004, p.1). It is a disabling response and as such is incompatible with the calls to action commonly associated with environmentally motivated artworks. While the labelling of the present era suggests human control—humans are the *anthropos* in Anthropocene—in actuality the entangled state of human and nature means that in effect human well-being is contingent on the health of the planet in a multitude of ways and the earth's health is in serious decline. As Hamilton states, human agency is not 'the autonomous capacity of free beings' instead it is 'a force always constrained by its embeddedness in the process of nature' (Hamilton 2017, p. 51).

Despite a generalised mission to make a difference in my own immediate sphere and personal interactions, the aim of this project is not to motivate political or social change and indeed few individuals are in a position to make notable transformations. According to Hamilton, 'responsibility lies with those in a position to change the

institutions' and even they are 'powerless' (Hamilton 2017, p. 53). Instead the intent has been to explore ideas of ecological grief through the creation of artworks which recognise and validate the experience. The project's purpose has been to open dialogue through imagery, colour palette and process and, in a non-activist manner, evoke affect and facilitate sensemaking and adaptation in the individual viewer, to promote what Hickey-Moody describes as "new lived sensibilities, or personal vocabularies" which "are often the product of artistic affects" (Hickey-Moody 2016, p. 262)

Methodologies have focused on process metaphorically voicing the experiences of Anthropogenic climate change impacts such as sea level rise, on the planet and on the human psyche. Key themes have been addressed in this manner through a new materialist lens which recognises the agency of materials at work in aleatory processes of inundation and flow which have been utilised in the creation of paintings and sculptures. The artefacts work in concert, the paintings portraying climate change induced events and the sculptures a resulting dystopian landscape. I share the view of Scranton who claims that we must 'accept that we have failed on climate change … accept our own mortality … accept how dire our situation is and begin to adapt to it with humility and compassion' (Scranton 2017) Scranton ascribes to a Samurai philosophy which suggests positive benefit in 'imagining one's own death every morning' (Scranton 2017).

> By confronting and imagining one's own death you can achieve a kind of freedom in your daily actions – there's an analogy for how we might move forward with climate change. (Scranton 2017)

Individuals and indeed whole societies whose lands are on the brink of collapse due to climate change effects such as sea level rise, heat waves and drought can no longer be flagged as wrong, negative, pessimistic or alarmist. Scientific consensus confirms humanity's unstoppable downward trajectory as a result of human-induced climate change. It will become increasingly important that methods to confront the psychological impact of climate change are developed as its effects escalate over time. Indeed, a challenging feature of this project has been the constantly shifting parameters of the topic as facts and projections are discarded, refined or advanced.

Fowler's 'emerging aesthetics of death' referred to in this paper introduces a compelling future direction in art-oriented considerations of the Anthropocene and the future of the world and its inhabitants generally, and one which I would like to interrogate further, beyond the scope of current investigations. This project does not claim that visual art can solve the issue of negative human affect as a result of climate change, but instead highlights both the contribution it can make and an increasing need for discourse on the importance of acknowledging and legitimising emotional response and facilitating acceptance of that which we cannot control.

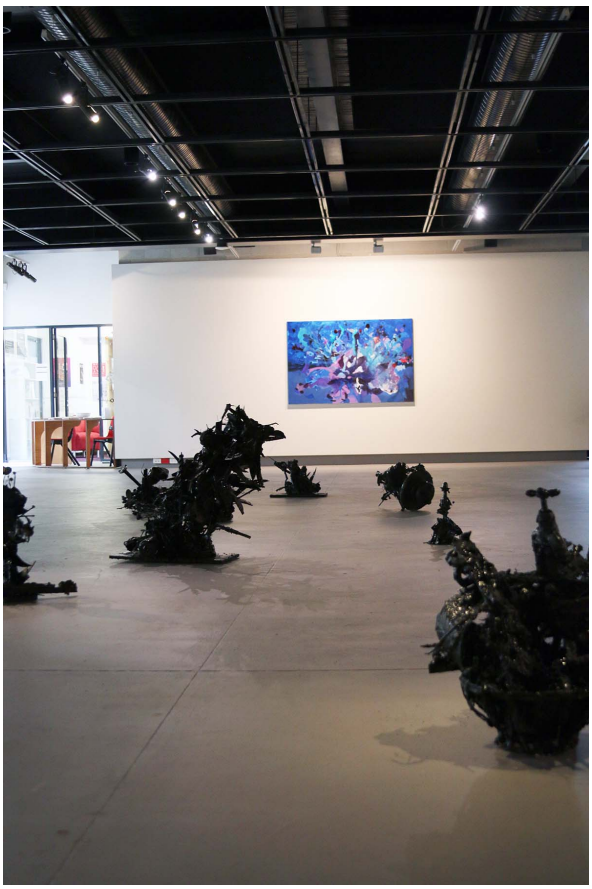

Figure 27: Catherine Phillips, Uncharted Territory and Cataclysm series, (installation view, Academy Gallery), 2018, Uncharted Territory - oil, acrylic, ink and enamel on canvas, 120cm x 180cm, Cataclysm series – found objects, plant matter, plaster, enamel and resin, various dimensions. Image credit Jo Pitchford.

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Appendix: Activities during the MFA

Conference presentations and attendance

2018

Presenter

*Art and the Anthropocene: Creative responses to a changing wo*rld, Beyond Survival: Austerity, Precarity, Resilience, University of Tasmania, Sandy Bay

2018

Attendee

Environmental writing: creativity and social efficacy, University of Melbourne

Awards

2018 Finalist, Artentwine Sculpture Biennial

2018 Highly Commended, Powerhouse Art Prize

2018 Winner, Captured Digital Art Prize

2017 Highly Commended, Pollock at the Princess Art Competition

2017 Finalist, Pollock at the Princess Art Competition

2017 Finalist, TUU Mt Nelson Award

Exhibitions

Solo

2017 *Slow Violence*, Sawtooth ARI, Launceston, TAS

2017 *Fake News*, Powerhouse Gallery, Launceston, TAS

Group

2018 *Members' Show*, Contemporary Art Tasmania, Hobart, TAS

2018 *Tasmanian Bushland Gardens Sculpture Trail*, Buckland, TAS

2018 *University of Tasmania Photography, Digital and Video Show*, Powerhouse Gallery, Inveresk, TAS
2018 Junction Art Festival Fringe Event, *Connection Collection*, Up York Space, Launceston, TAS
2018 *Powerhouse Gallery Art Prize*, Powerhouse Gallery, Inveresk, TAS
2018 *Captured* Digital Art Prize, Princess Theatre Stairwell Gallery, Launceston, TAS
2018 *University of Tasmania 3D Show*, Powerhouse Gallery, Inveresk, TAS
2018 *Open Day Student Works Show*, University of Tasmania, Inveresk, TAS
2018 *Dear Kunyani*, The Long Gallery, Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart, TAS
2018 *Clarence Biennial*, Rosny Farm, Hobart, TAS
2018 *Members' Show*, Sawtooth ARI, Launceston, TAS
2018 *University of Tasmania 2D Show*, Powerhouse Gallery, Inveresk, TAS
2018 *Annual Auction*, Sawtooth ARI Gallery, Launceston, TAS
2017 *CAT Members' Show*, Contemporary Art Tasmania, Hobart, TAS
2017 *Pollock at the Princess Art Prize*, Princess Theatre, Launceston, TAS
2017 *Open Day Student Works Show*, University of Tasmania, Inveresk, TAS
2017 *Masters and Honours Work in Progress Show*, Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart, TAS
2017 *Members' Show*, Sawtooth ARI, Launceston, TAS
2017 Performance work concept, *Impermanence* selected to be enacted as part of Panopticon at Dark Mofo, Hunter St Art School, Hobart, TAS
2017 *University of Tasmania 2D Show*, Powerhouse Gallery, Launceston, TAS
2017 *Annual Auction*, Sawtooth ARI Gallery, Launceston, TAS
2017 *60,000 Artists World Environment Day Exhibition*, Watch This Space ARI Gallery, Alice Springs, NT
2017 *Triad 1*, Holographic Lounge, Sawtooth ARI Gallery, Launceston, TAS
2017 *Material Girl Art Prize*, (touring exhibition) Sawtooth ARI Launceston, Burnie Regional Art Gallery and The Schoolhouse Gallery, Hobart.